

WHERE TO TURN?: A CASE STUDY OF CZECH STUDENT
AND LOCAL ADVISOR EXPERIENCES OF
WRITING PERSONAL STATEMENTS
FOR UNDERGRADUATE ANGLOPHONE ADMISSIONS



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Remember that writing is translation, and the opus to be translated is yourself.

-E.B. White

Abstract

At the intersection of language learning and international student mobility, the personal statement (PS) in United States and United Kingdom university undergraduate admissions is often an English as a foreign language (EFL) learner's first exposure to the use of English for academic purposes. This case study was inspired by an EFL secondary school student's emotional experience confronting this challenge in the semi-peripheral context of the Czech Republic and designed around the hypotheses that this problem occurred because of a lack of familiarity with the PS genre in Czech- and EFL-writing instruction, a lack of PS information and resources, and unstructured PS feedback.

In adopting a pragmatist stance, the study design aggregated practitioner voices to interrogate these hypotheses, as sources of the PS genre as a problem, and uncover solutions through research questions that probed (1) the student's and three local Czech advisors' experiences; (2) the input and feedback available from these local advisors and two Anglophone university gatekeepers; and (3) existing best practices. Semi-structured interviews, informed by narrative inquiry, served to elevate the six participants' voices and incorporate contextual factors based on sociocultural theory and academic literacies. This study uniquely contributes to PS genre research in its juxtaposition of student, advisor, and gatekeeper voices, selected theoretical lenses, and attention to the Czech educational context and undergraduate admissions level.

The narrative analysis findings confirm that the PS was problematic because of conflicts between aspects of the student's Czech background and six identified features of the PS genre. The construction of knowledge networks and comparison of feedback provision demonstrate that input and feedback informed by genre expertise are not equally available in the Czech EFL context to address these conflicts and mediate emotional consequences. Given the pragmatist urgency to find solutions, participants' pedagogical recommendations span PS input and feedback, and EFL teacher training.

Key Words: English for academic purposes, second language writing and feedback, personal statements, genre, Czech Republic.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AA	Admissions Advisor (the Local Experts)
CT	Counselor Teacher (the Local Experts)
D1	Draft 1
D2	Draft 2
EAP	English for academic purposes
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELL	English-language learner
EMI	English medium of instruction
ET	English Teacher (the Case)
LET	Local English teacher
L1	First language
L2	Second language
NEST	Native English speaker teacher
PS(s)	Personal statement(s)
SCT	Sociocultural theory
SFL	Systemic-functional linguistics
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Application Service
UE	University Evaluator (the University Gatekeepers)
UK	United Kingdom
UR	University Recruiter (the University Gatekeepers)
US	United States of America

Chapter 1: Introduction

The rise of student mobility, as studying abroad has both increased in access and interest for students around the world, demands attention to the linguistic impacts for international students. English has become the lingua franca for academia (Gonerko-Frej, 2014) and Anglophone universities in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) are the highest-ranking in the world (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2018: Times Higher Education, 2018). Therefore, English-language learners (ELLs) face the barrier of using English to not only apply but also to survive in Anglophone academic settings (Lillis, 2001). International students from all linguistic backgrounds also face the challenge of adapting to a different academic culture when studying in Anglophone contexts (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014). In the US, there has been an 85% increase over the past 10 years in the total number of international university-level students (Institute of International Education, 2017a). In the UK, about 19% of first-year university students in 2016/2017 were of non-UK origin (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018a). Universities continue to recruit international students for a mix of economic, political, academic and sociocultural reasons (de Wit, 2002), and thus it is crucial to consider these students' needs and skills to ensure equal access to international education opportunities.

In focusing on a case study of an ELL in the Czech Republic writing a personal statement (PS) for undergraduate Anglophone admissions and recognizing that the PS is heavily influenced by the cultural values and academic traditions of the target Anglophone context (Swales & Feak, 1994), this study aims to fill the research gap in three key areas. First, the study design brings together the voices of a student, local advisors, and Anglophone gatekeepers to interrogate the confrontation in understandings and expectations between the English as a foreign language (EFL) and Anglophone contexts. Second, the selected theoretical frameworks of inquiry (Section 3.2) go beyond linguistic analysis to consider the broader pragmatic and cultural impacts of and implications for PS pedagogy in EFL settings. Third, the situation of this case study in the Czech education and undergraduate Anglophone admissions contexts is unique in both of these areas of research and particularly in their combination. Consequently, the following study aims to capture the needs and practices of the student and local advisors navigating the Anglophone

undergraduate admissions process in order to identify any gaps, prompt further inquiry, and inspire pedagogical action in support of EFL applicants.

This dissertation has five subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature in the areas of second language (L2) writing, L2-writing feedback, PSs as a genre, and the Czech educational context. Chapter 3 outlines the study design, instruments and methods of data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 offers findings according to three hypothesized areas of inquiry. Chapter 5 interprets these findings in the context of relevant research. Chapter 6 concludes with the main results, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The written personal statement (PS) is complex; prompting research into its intrinsic features, and extrinsic situation in the Anglophone admissions process. For a Czech secondary school student writing a PS for undergraduate Anglophone admission, the plethora of issues at the crossroads of language learning and international education offers much to analyze. The following literature review situates this study in the wider research about the process, product, context, and teaching of writing (Archibald & Jeffrey, 2000).

2.1 Second Language Writing

Second language (L2) writing has utility as a means of L2-learning based on the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2005, i.e. language production promotes noticing of knowledge gaps as learners must modify their output to be comprehensible) and as an end for L2-discourse competence (Canale, 1983, i.e. the ability to combine grammatical forms to achieve coherent, meaningful communication). However, L2 writing, particularly in post-Communist EFL settings (Tarnopolsky, 2000), has been undervalued compared to reading, listening, and speaking (Manchón, 2009). Hayes' (2012) most recent L2-writing model incorporates such contextual factors as influencing writing as a cognitive exercise in language acquisition: the learner's motivation, goal setting, and prior knowledge at the added Control Level play a distinct role from the specific task environment and writing processes at the Process Level and cognitive activities at the Resource Level. The influence of emotion in this model is examined in Section 2.1.1 because of its presence in language learning (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002) and admissions process (Ishop, 2008).

Further, L2 writing in a foreign context can develop language for use in specific purposes, including academic study, business, etc., to access and communicate within new discourse communities (Swales, 1990, i.e. "sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals," p. 9). Section 2.1.2 discusses genre knowledge and pedagogy as prominent in English for academic purposes (EAP) instruction (K. Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002), in which instruction specifically targets the discourse competence

needed to succeed in the Anglophone-academic discourse community (“target discourse community”; Alexander, Argent & Spencer, 2008).

2.1.1 Emotion and L2 Writing

Emotion, a mental state that is, “usually caused by a person consciously or unconsciously evaluating an event as relevant to a concern (a goal) that is important,” and “gives priority for one or a few kinds of action to which it gives a sense of urgency,” (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996, p. 96), is an inseparable part of the learning process (van Compernelle, 2014). From a cognitive perspective, in which writing is an exercise in thinking (Ruiz-Funes, 1999) to discover and address rhetorical problems (Flower & Hayes, 1980) of specific tasks (Byrnes & Manchón, 2014), writing emotionally involves a struggle between attention to composition and transcription. In Hayes’ (2012) model, emotion is posited to affect both motivation at the Control Level and working memory (Baddeley, 2007, i.e. “a temporary storage system under attentional control that underpins our capacity for complex thought,” p. 31) at the Resource Level. Similarly, Weiner’s (2014) attributional theory proposes that negative emotions due to anticipated failures yield a negative motivation to achieve a goal and to engage in social behavior for learning. Negative emotions, such as anxiety, also constrain working memory capacity, leaving limited resources available for writing (Derakshan & Eysenck, 2010; Gotoh, 2008). Therefore, writers experiencing negative emotions face challenges at two cognitive processing levels, which affects their abilities to maintain control and dedicate their full cognitive and linguistic resources to a writing task.

Applying these theories to L2 writing, if a learner perceives that they will fail a task either due to lack of self-confidence, discontent with the task, or anxiety about either, they will be less motivated, less likely to complete the task, and more likely to reject support. Specific writing outcomes of such negative emotional conditions can include shorter text lengths (Fartoukh, Chanquoy & Piolat, 2012) or the inability to move beyond lexico-morphosyntactic (lower-level) processing during the planning, composing, and revising stages of writing (Clachar, 1999). L2-users already exhibit an “underuse of emotion vocabulary,” (p. 374) because of feelings of detachment from the L2 and a lack of attention to emotional expression in FL teaching materials, which perpetuate a preference for first

language (L1) self-expression (Dewaele, 2005). Simulating the pressure of the admissions context, Seeley, Yanez, Stanton, and Hoyt (2017) found that participants' abilities to overcome negative emotional priming in a writing procedure correlated with good habits of acknowledging and expressing emotions. Therefore, L2-writers facing emotional topics in negatively emotional conditions are disadvantaged to successfully complete such tasks.

2.1.2 Genre Knowledge, Instruction, and EAP

A genre is a categorization of discourse based on common features and purpose (Herrington & Moran, 2005). Tardy (2009) characterizes genre knowledge, or the ability to recognize and respond appropriately to different situations, as comprised of process, formal (discourse and lexico-grammatical), subject-matter, and rhetorical (social context) knowledge, which must be integrated to develop genre expertise. These components align with Kellogg's (1994) types of writing knowledge as metacognitive (strategic, task, and self), conceptual (content and discourse), and sociocultural knowledge. Writing a genre therefore requires attention to writing and genre knowledges to adhere to generic conventions, as constructed by a discourse community (Swales, 1990).

To foster genre knowledge, teachers are seen as important allies to guide L2-students' understanding of genre conventions (K. Hyland, 2008). Explicit genre-based instruction has been shown to yield success for L2-students accessing new discourse communities (Huang, 2014) and the development of independent genre writing skills and confidence, even when experiencing L2-writing anxiety (Han & Hiver, 2018). Teachers' roles in the two genre-based approaches used for literacy development (K. Hyland, 2008) involve scaffolding linguistic and syntactic structure acquisition to achieve a genre's contextualized function according to the systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) tradition (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), or clarifying the expectations of the target discourse community through linguistic and structural text analysis in an EAP genre-based approach (Swales, 1990). As EAP practices extend to non-Anglophone higher education contexts with the rise of English medium instruction (EMI; Dearden, 2015), EFL teachers and students prefer this explicit, systematic, supportive, empowering needs-based,

critical, and consciousness-raising approach (K. Hyland, 2004), to promote the acquisition of practical genre knowledge with limited time (Wingate, 2012).

2.2 Feedback on L2 Writing

EFL writing feedback traditionally focuses on language (J. Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994); and in EAP, the argument that this error-focused feedback is insufficient for development of discourse competence (Truscott 1996) is of particular importance. Instead, dynamic feedback has been suggested as meaningful, timely, constant, and manageable (Evans, Hartshorn & Strong-Krause, 2011) to go beyond linguistic features (Blau & Hall, 2002; Ferris, 2012). In genre-based pedagogy, feedback assists students in jointly and independently constructing texts as they experiment with a genre (K. Hyland, 2007). In an EAP genre-based approach, feedback must address L2-writers' achievement of specific conventions that are desired by the target discourse community (Hyland, 2004). Feedback providers for EAP genres therefore have a responsibility to attend to this context to ensure accurate production.

One of the key areas of L2-writing feedback research is the question of whether L2-learners prefer teacher or peer feedback. While both have many demonstrated benefits (F. Hyland & K. Hyland, 2006), the focus on learners' preferences in recent research reflects a renewed interest in pedagogy that attends to students' needs and individual differences (Dörnyei, 2005). Both teachers and students regard teacher feedback as a critical authority (Ferris & J.S. Hedgcock, 2014; G. Hu & Ren, 2012; Nelson & Carson, 1998), to provide encouragement and constructive criticism beyond language use (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Elwood & Bode, 2014). With this responsibility, Percell (2017) recommends that teacher feedback must build on the trust established between the teacher and learner. Beyond this interaction, Unlu and Wharton (2015) found a more complex relationship in an EAP feedback process that included multi-directional relationships with external sources of authority, such as gatekeepers. In EAP instruction in an EFL context, teachers therefore are a mediating authority between learners' L2-writing development and the target discourse community.

2.3 Personal Statements as a Genre

According to Nesi and Gardner's (2012) classification of academic genres, the personal statement of the UK undergraduate application and personal essay of US undergraduate applications qualify as a single written genre ("personal statements"; PSs) because these texts share common functions, social purposes, and stages (i.e. content sections). Looking first to function, the PS genre has been socially constructed (Hyland, 2002) as a gatekeeping tool for students to gain access to the discourse communities of Anglophone higher education, based on the subjective-evaluation of admissions gatekeepers (Chiu, 2015). Objective criteria for the genre are unclear and context-specific to the target level of study, academic discipline, or institution of the application (Mathur & Kamat, 2014). To compound this "semi-occluded" status (Samraj & Monk, 2008, p. 194), the general pressures for L2-English writers to use EAP to further their academic career goals are well-documented (Flowerdew 2000, 2001, 2007). Therefore, the PS genre is important in function, with high-stakes for execution.

The purpose of PSs is summarized in their classification as a promotional genre (R.M. Brown, Jr., 2005), in which applicants must promote their strengths and fit for a specific university or program. In order to communicate this purpose and fulfill the aforementioned function of the genre, writers must self-aggrandize by asserting an identity in their writing (K. Hyland, 2011). Ivanič's (1998) classification of a writer's "discoursal self" (p. 25) requires that this identity is constructed based on the target discourse community (K. Hyland, 2012), even if it does not genuinely represent their self-image. Research into identity in academic writing has revealed that both L1- and L2-writers often feel that the adoption of these linguistic or genre-specific conventions obscures their voices (K. Hyland, 2011). The extent to which an EFL writer is able to fulfill the PS's purpose requires an alignment of their discoursal self with the promotional demands of the genre, as constructed by its functional context in the target discourse community.

To achieve the function and purpose, several genre or discourse analyses of postgraduate PSs (Chiu, 2016; Ding, 2007; Samraj & Monk, 2008) have identified common moves and

steps, and their development across versions and drafts (Wang & Flowerdew, 2016). A corpus analysis by R.M. Brown (2004) identified that successful PSs dedicated a higher proportion of content to the target moves of a specific postgraduate course. Yet, the undergraduate PS presents a unique set of challenges (Johns, 2015), as secondary school students who have less experiences and unclear academic directions are unable to fulfill many of the identified moves that focus on research interests and background. As the academic transition between secondary school and university is difficult (Harke, 2010), particularly for L2-students (Kern & Schultz, 1992), achieving the stages of the PS is a first leap from more elementary genres to academic writing (Johns, 2005). The present study contributes uniquely to this existing PS research by examining an EFL secondary school student's experience learning how to fulfill the function, purpose, and stages of the PS in this transition period

R.M. Brown (2004) describes a “rhetorical void” (p. 243) for applicants without support from their formal curriculum or current teachers to learn or practice the PS genre. Cited materials for PS writing come in two forms: books targeting the general application pool and online sources. While no systematic analysis of these print sources or their methodologies exist¹, numerous examples exhibit a genre-based approach by presenting model PSs for analysis (e.g. Stannard, 2016; W. Zhang & Mohapatra, 2014). Tens of thousands of websites prey on applicants' anxieties to meet the genre's extrinsically and intrinsically emotional function and purpose in the absence of a clear method by charging extravagant fees for the privilege of information (Ishop, 2008) about university expectations, examples, and best practices to fit the subjective “desired” outcome of admissions officers (Mathur & Kamat, 2014). The present study aims to investigate the use and perceptions of these sources of PS input in an EFL context.

¹ No systematic analyses of methodological approaches of PS writing materials were found in databases including ERIC, LLBA, and Oxford SOLO.

2.4 Czech Educational Context

Investigation into the historical pedagogies of both L1 and L2 writing is necessary (Tang, 2012) to provide an understanding of Czech EFL-writers' challenges in the semiperiphery (sharing some features) of the target discourse community (Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 2014). Characterizations of post-Communist educational environments display strains between the previous, top-down orientation and the current, more Anglophone democratic principles of individualism and expression (Moree, 2013; Webber, 2001). At the macro-level, this means a split in policy directives between a national Czech Framework for Educational Programmes (FEP) and local decision-making on materials and curriculum in autonomous School Educational Programmes (SEP) (The Education Act of 2004). At the micro-level, this means a struggle for teachers facing more responsibility and control in their classrooms from the top-down; yet, weakened authority as students push for pedagogy that encourages free expression, critical thinking, and creativity from the bottom-up (Moree, 2013; Otevřeno, 2015).

Originating with the Prague Linguistic School, after the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, Czech L1-instruction has continued a functional-structural linguistic tradition (in line with SFL; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) with a focus on grammatical linguistic structures and teaching language based on functions (Breveníková, 2013; Šmejkalová, 2015). According to the FEP, (Výzkumný ústav pedagogický v Praze [VÚP], 2007), writing as an outcome and subject of secondary L1-instruction is only mentioned within this functional context, attending only to rhetoric and register. As the culmination of secondary level L1-writing instruction, the *Maturita* exam requires students to write one text (20 minutes preparation to choose from 6 prompts; 90 minutes writing) of a minimum of 250 words that is evaluated based on adherence to the genre, functional use of language, and syntactic construction of the text (Nová Maturita, 2018). To achieve these goals, the SEP choice in curricula is limited to two main Czech textbook publishers (Ministerstvo Školství Mládeže a Tělovýchovy [MŠMT], 2018). Overall, the prioritization of language (and literature) in the FEP, *Maturita* exam, and materials (VÚP, 2007) means writing as a topic of linguistic communication is addressed less (as a percentage of L1-instructional hours) as secondary students progress to the point where Šmejkalová and Štěpaník (2016)

describe their writing abilities upon graduation as, “unsatisfactory communication skills,” (p. 46).

As the country opened after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, an increased demand for English language courses brought exposure to practices of communicative language instruction in English language teaching (ELT) methodology (Píšová & Kostková, 2015). According to the FEP (VÚP 2007), English must be offered as a first or second FL (starting from the first year of primary education) and L2 writing plays a larger role in the target outcomes and subject matter, with attention to structure, style, register, rhetoric, and communicative abilities. MŠMT (2018) recommends eight different Anglophone or locally-published textbooks from which schools may select to meet these targets in their SEP. The foreign language *Maturita* exam requires students to write two texts (1: 120-150 words; 2: 60-70 words) in 60 minutes to demonstrate at least a B1 level of European CEFR proficiency (Council of Europe, 2018) and meet the style, structure, audience, and function of the tasks (Nová Maturita, 2016). Despite this wider scope of EFL writing in Czech education, this study addresses how this L2-instruction and the comparably limited L1-writing instruction intersected with a Czech student’s experience of PS writing.

In summary, L2 writing and teacher feedback are important components of EAP instruction, particularly in an EFL context, which is removed from the target discourse community. Despite this evidence, the PS, an emotional piece of writing that is embedded in Anglophone cultural values, remains semi-occluded by a lack of consensus in curriculum materials. The situation of this case study in the Czech educational context explores this quandary in a semi-peripheral academic culture of traditionally limited writing instruction.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

This exploratory study aimed to investigate the following research questions:

RQ1: What were a Czech secondary school student's and Czech advisors' experiences writing and giving feedback on personal statements (PSs) for Anglophone admissions?

RQ2: What input and feedback are available to Czech secondary school students writing this genre from Czech advisors and university gatekeepers?

RQ3: What are possible recommendations for pedagogy in Czech secondary schools based on the student experience, Czech advisor best practices, and gatekeeper criteria?

After observing and working with Czech secondary school students for 5 years, this study was designed based on the hypotheses that the PS is problematic for this population because of (1) a lack of familiarity with the Anglophone PS genre in L1- and L2-writing instruction in Czech secondary schools; (2) a lack of information and resources about the genre; and (3) an unstructured PS feedback from Czech secondary school teachers. RQ1 seeks evidence in support of these hypotheses based on the Czech participants' experiences. Consequently, RQ2 and RQ3 were interrogated by aggregating and cross-referencing existing practices that could form the basis of a future pedagogy for assisting Czech secondary school students with PS writing. It is hoped that by answering these questions, Czech students and advisors will be better prepared to confront the PS genre and achieve students' goals of undergraduate Anglophone admissions.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The following study was developed within the epistemological framework of pragmatism, and the theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory and academic literacies.

3.2.1 Pragmatism

Arising out of the tension between the positivist and metaphysical frameworks of social scientific inquiry, pragmatism, as promoted in the field of education in the writings of John Dewey (e.g. Dewey, 1902, 1938) draws no distinction between theory and practice (Pring, 2015). As an epistemological philosophy, pragmatism sees truth as constructed by the interaction between external factors and internal interpretations and validated through lived experiences (Garrison, Neubert & Reich, 2012; Pring, 2007). When applied as a paradigm of scientific inquiry (Kuhn, 1970), pragmatism incorporates the influence of external factors (i.e. the researcher's environment) and observations (i.e. data) on the researcher's experience to recognize and explore a problem, and develop a practical solution (Elkjaer, 2009; Morgan, 2007). Rather than doubt subjectivity, Dewey's acknowledgement that thought and environment are intertwined elevates human experience as a valid basis of evidence (Dewey, 1916). Crucially, Dewey democratically applied this to the experiences of students and teachers as active, practical participants in knowledge acquisition (Dewey, 1902) and the ultimate drivers of theory, based on their intimate involvement and investment in education problems (Morris, 2014). Particularly within literacy research (Dillon, O'Brien, & Heilman, 2000), pragmatist researchers can align a variety of different stakeholders to develop "warranted assertions" (i.e. evidence-based suggestions) that account for the practical realities of current "indeterminate situations" (i.e. a situation in which there are a variety of actors and practices), and their future "unified situation" solutions (i.e. a situation in which there is a generally agreed-upon solution) (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Pragmatism therefore mediates the positivist-constructivist continuum to systematically examine constructed realities and deliver them to a point of definition where empirical testing could further validate the characterization of problems and solutions.

Pragmatism has become a dominant framework in EAP because it strongly prioritizes language learning for student success. Swales (1990) advocated that EAP instruction, "rests on a pragmatic concern to help people, both non-native and native speakers, to develop their academic communicative competence" (p. 9). Although the present study focuses on a problem from the perspective of an L2-English student, the quotation above indicates that academic writing is a challenge for L1- and L2-English students. As more US and UK

universities extend access to students from increasingly diverse socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds (e.g. in the UK in 2014-2015, there was a 4.6% increase POLAR quintile 1 students entering their first-degree [Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2017]; in the US in 2017, 24% of children speak a language other than English at home [Kids Count Data Center, 2018]), the solutions that arise from pragmatic EAP research may have relevance for populations beyond EFL learners, who face the same problem of an unfamiliar discourse community, genre, and task combination (Santos, 1992; Wingate, 2012).

In the context of Kachru's (1997) three-tiered hierarchy of countries in the Concentric Circles Model of English-Use, according to linguistic imperialism and the theory of "world Englishes" (i.e. English as it has evolved in different environments), critical approaches (Benesch, 1996, 2009; Harwood & Hadley, 2004; Pennycook, 1997) have criticized pragmatism as perpetuating the hegemony of Anglophone writing standards. These theories warn against EFL writing instruction demonizing or replacing existing L1-writing practices and instruction (Schreiber, 2016). However, for EAP writing in an EFL context, instruction in line with these critical theories runs the risk of limiting students' abilities to use English to meet (L1-user normed) expectations and to achieve their academic and career goals in the target discourse community (K. Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). As a compromise, this study adopts Allison's (1998) proposed, "ethically-responsible pragmatism" (p. 313), or the priority of the acquisition of linguistic tools needed to advance, with a secondary acknowledgement of the dilemmas of conforming to these norms.

3.2.2 Sociocultural Theory

Based on Vygotsky (1978), sociocultural theory (SCT) in education posits that learning occurs through social interaction and is mediated through psychologically perceived social cues (i.e. positive or negative responses from one's environment) (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Of relevance to this study, SCT firstly frames assessment methods as mirroring, "the values and beliefs of the broader society in which they are developed and used," (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2015, p. 121). Preparing students' EAP knowledge for

assessment can thereby be seen as preparing them for the larger community of practice (Wenger, 1999) of academia (Li, 2007) when writing their PS. Secondly, SCT acknowledges that emotion in learning represents value placed on learning by the learner or teacher and causes behavior or action to shift accordingly. This Vygotskian principle has been extended to consider L2-student and local (L2-English) teacher (LET; Copland, Garton, & Mann, 2016) identities as socially constructed and fragile, in the context of linguistic performance and expertise as held to the myth of a native speaker ideal (Reis, 2011). Thirdly, the SCT role of a teacher or educational advisor to assist students in advancing through Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), or the area of cognitive development that is just beyond the existing state of the learner (Kinginger, 2002), aligns with the teacher roles identified in genre-based L2 writing and feedback (K. Hyland, 2008). The following study contributes to the ongoing debate on what the ZPD contains (Chaiklin, 2003), and whether practitioners are able to facilitate this progress (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Thus, SCT is a highly pertinent framework because it offers a lens to analyze the wider social and cultural factors that shape and influence language learning experience.

3.2.3 Academic Literacies

Upon examining institutional expectations of student writing, Lea and Street (1998) concluded that academic literacies accounts for, "what constitutes valid knowledge within a particular context, and the relationships of authority that exist around the communication of these assumptions," (p. 170). This approach synthesizes study skills (where writing is a cognitive exercise) and academic socialization (where writing is a process of integrating into a discourse community) to facilitate curriculum development and analysis (Lea & Street, 2006) that incorporates attention to language and context (Wingate, 2006); particularly, the high stakes at play in the power dynamics of producing writing for evaluation (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Murray (2016) has since used this theory to argue for decentralized EAP instruction that accounts for different actors' expertise to promote academic literacy. Academic literacies influenced a selection of analysis approaches (Section 3.8.2) that served to visualize and uncover how these relationships affected text

production. Therefore, the theory of academic literacies helps to evaluate EFL writing practice of the PS within the power dynamics of Anglophone admissions contexts.

3.3 Study Design

Hence, this exploratory study was designed to consider the sources and solutions to a problem identified through the Researcher's experience: that Czech secondary school students applying for US and UK undergraduate programs had difficulties writing the PS genre ("the Problem"). In order to better understand the complexities of the Problem in the absence of other empirical studies,² a qualitative approach was selected to construct a broad foundation and set the stage for further inquiry.

3.3.1 Narrative Inquiry

A narrative inquiry approach was selected, based on the pragmatist stance that a starting point to understand the complexities of the Problem and assess the viability of potential solutions is through practitioner experiences. Narrative inquiry is a research method that, "focus[es] on how people use stories to make sense of their experiences in areas of inquiry where it is important to understand phenomena from the perspectives of those who experience them" (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014, p. 2). Narrative inquiry also offers a way to capture experiential variability, based on chance and circumstance (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Benson (2014) proposes that narrative inquiry in applied linguistics research is a method that provides greater insight into the complexities of language development, particularly related to learning, teaching, and identity formation. A narrative inquiry approach thus encapsulates the numerous cognitive, social, internal, and external processes at play in the Problem.

Despite these strengths, narrative inquiry remains an under-utilized methodology compared to traditional patterns of empirical studies because of its inherent subjectivity

² No studies were found in databases including ERIC, LLBA, and Oxford SOLO that were published in English and looked at ELLs writing PSs at the undergraduate level, or about Czech students writing PSs for Anglophone admissions at any level.

(Benson, 2014). However, in this pragmatist study that merges the Researcher's and various stakeholders' experiences, narrative inquiry permits and calls for awareness of the behaviors and context that shaped the data (De Fina, 2009). This comprehensive approach, encapsulating a range of human perspectives and emotionalism (Silverman, 2013, i.e. "the real in the emotional life of the researcher and the respondents," p. 106) is necessary to understand all of the factors, particularly emotion, that contribute to the Problem and its possible solutions. Consequently, narrative inquiry offers a framework in which to incorporate and systematically analyze the subjectivity and causes and effects of emotions that characterize the Problem and existing evaluations of solutions, in order to pave the way for future study to corroborate or complement these narrative points of view.

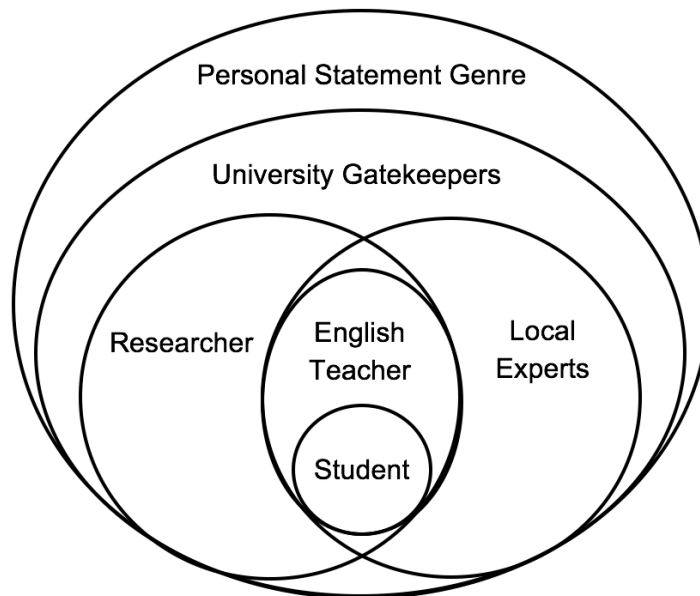
3.3.2 Case Study

A case study approach was also selected to deeply investigate the Problem to determine possible root causes and identify existing solutions. In case study research, "the investigator preserves and interrogates particular instances, sequences of action, the way participants negotiate language and narrative genres in conversations, and other unique aspects of a 'case'," (Riessman, 2011, p. 311). In education research, case study research is often selected to provide groundwork for future hypotheses that can broaden inquiry into a given phenomenon (Merriam, 1988), as this study aims to do. In language learning research, it is commonly used, whether to voluntarily investigate the experiences of a particular student or classroom, or involuntarily respond to funding or time constraints (Fitzpatrick, Al-Qarni, & Meara, 2008; Flowerdew, 2007; Shahiri & Naseh, 2008; Yip & Matthews, 2000). Case study research is therefore confined to a specific context and cannot claim to be representative of all those who encounter a phenomenon (Mackey & Gass, 2016; Simons, 2009). However, because of the pragmatist urgency to develop solutions, this case study is analyzed instrumentally (Stake, 2008, i.e. to understand the larger picture beyond the particular student) and pedagogical implications were included as a research question (Section 3.1). It is hoped that the voices elevated, data collected, and conclusions reached in this case study can guide future research to replicate findings on a broader scale or explore generalizability to other populations.

The case of this study (“the Case”) centers upon the narrative of one Czech secondary school student (“the Student”), with whom the Researcher worked between December 2016 and January 2017 to confront the Problem (specifically, to apply to UK undergraduate programs). This case was selected for empirical inquiry upon identifying a paradox: the Student struggled with PS writing, despite high levels of English language proficiency and English language education, and a one-year program of secondary Anglophone education and experience living in the US, two years prior to confronting the Problem. To supplement the Student’s experience of the Problem and construct a full picture of the Case, the Researcher approached the Student’s English Teacher (“the English Teacher”), with whom she had worked on her PS prior to engaging the Researcher for feedback. Then, to bridge between the Problem and potential context-specific solutions of the Case, these perspectives were complemented with those of more experienced Czech advisors (“the Local Experts”) with whom the Student could have worked under different circumstances (e.g. had she lived in a different location, paid to attend a private school, or been aware of their services). Finally, these local practices are contrasted with the perceived needs of these stakeholders, located in the semiperiphery, as reported by undergraduate admissions gatekeepers (“the University Gatekeepers”) of the target Anglophone discourse community.

Figure 1 displays how this community of inquiry was conceptualized in a knowledge hierarchy, based on access to PS genre knowledge. A model of concentric circles was devised to depict different levels of knowledge from the perspective of the Student, with the English Teacher, Local Experts, and the Researcher at the closest level, the University Gatekeepers at the next, and the Personal Statement Genre at the farthest away. The overlapping nature of the circles represents the potential overlaps in knowledge between the different informants, based on their relationship to the Anglophone admissions process as the PS genre context. This model guided the order in which informants were identified, and data were collected and analyzed.

FIGURE 1: Study Design Knowledge Hierarchy



3.4 Population and Sample

Acknowledging the narrative nature of this study, each of the actors is described below; as their experience pertains to the Problem, akin to the descriptions of characters in a play. They are separated into three groups based on their involvement with the Case (Section 3.4.1) and their location in Figure 1.

3.4.1 The Case

The Student: The Student is a recent graduate of a selective 8-year program at a state-school *gymnázium* (tr: Czech university preparation school) offering the Czech national curriculum (“the Gymnázium”), in a large Czech town (“Czech Town”). At the time of the Case (19-years old), she lived with her father, a small business owner, in a village outside of Czech Town. She currently (20-years old) studies as an undergraduate at a Scottish university. The Student began learning English in the 2nd grade (approximately 7-years old) at a state-elementary school in Czech Town. Within the 8-year Gymnázium program, the Student had 3-4 sessions (45 minutes each) of English language instruction per week each year, separated into sessions focused on language (i.e. vocabulary, grammar, and

skills) and conversation, and 3 sessions of German language instruction per week from years 3-8. The Gymnázium curriculum is oriented around preparation for the state *Maturita* exam, which is administered in year 8. The Student claimed to have gained average marks in English until participating in a one-year exchange at a secondary school in the US (16-years old), where she took a full curriculum of subjects (EMI) and reportedly developed a confident ability to communicate after 3 months. Upon returning to the Gymnázium (17-years old), her English level had dramatically improved to pass the Cambridge FCE exam (Cambridge English, 2018) with a level of C1. However, she was held back to catch up with the Czech curriculum and eventually graduated one year late.

The Student decided to apply to UK universities (a closer distance) upon returning from the US and as a result of talking with a friend who already studied abroad. She explored the option further when visiting the small international section at a higher education fair in a larger nearby city. Her desired course of UK study was Business Management, based on her secondary school specialization in Economics and Marketing, her family background, local professional experiences, and leadership experience as the Class Representative at the Gymnázium, as evidenced in her PS drafts (Appendix A; Appendix B). Although she briefly considered applying to study English Language and Literature within the Philosophy Faculty at a Czech university, she did not and, ultimately, feared being, “*stuck in Czech [Republic],*” if not admitted in the UK.

The English Teacher (ET): The ET graduated from the Pedagogical Faculty of a Czech university with a Master’s degree in Czech Language and Literature and English Language and Literature. After, she taught Czech, English, and German languages for one year at an elementary school. Since then, she has taught L1-Czech and L2-English languages at the Gymnázium for 10 years. She now solely teaches English language to students (approximately 15-20 years old) in the 4-year and 8-year university preparation programs, and the pedagogical and language school programs of the school.

The ET taught the Student’s Gymnázium English lesson for the 5 years (6 calendar years), prior to the Student’s US exchange year. The ET reported that, “*when she got back it, it*

was still the teacher-student relationship, but we were much closer,” and they discussed both school and personal matters. The Student approached the ET for PS feedback in December 2016 and has been the only student with whom the ET has worked on PS writing.

The Researcher: The Researcher, from the US, first engaged with the Problem when teaching English at the Gymnázium (Academic Year [AY] 2013-2014; 22 years-old) as an English teaching assistant through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. The Researcher had completed a four-month study abroad program in the Czech Republic (20-years old), including an internship at the US Admissions Outreach Center (a US government organization), that motivated her apply for this position. She had no prior formal teaching experience, and ELT training for the role involved an initial three-day orientation.

The first week, a local English teacher (LET) at the Gymnázium approached the Researcher to assist another student with PS writing and preparing for a standardized UK language exam. The Researcher used her personal experience, having written the genre to apply for US undergraduate study and her Fulbright position, to give feedback and discuss the student’s writing. Other LETs also asked her to give lessons on essay writing, based on a lack of L1-writing instruction and practice (Tavakoli, 2014). Upon returning to the US in 2014, the Researcher continued to learn about ELT and the Anglophone admissions process as an exchange program administrator for international students from 150+ countries applying to US universities and through privately advising L2-English students on PS writing.

The Researcher first met the Student at the end of AY 2013-2014 when the Student returned from the US. They quickly developed rapport over their exchange experiences. As a guest teacher at the Gymnázium in Autumn 2016, the Researcher taught the Student’s class and they had a friendly relationship. Before the Researcher returned to the US in November 2016, the Student approached her for assistance to confront the Problem. The Student then followed up via Facebook messenger to ask for general help in December 2016 and then for feedback in January 2017 (Appendix C).

3.4.2 The Local Experts

The Counselor Teacher (CT): The CT studied theoretical physics within the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at a Czech university, with the aim of being a researcher or academic. The CT first taught for 4-6 hours a week for 2 years in a state *gymnázium* to earn money as a postgraduate student. He is still a PhD candidate, but is focused on his role as a 5-year teacher of Physics, Mathematics, and Advanced Mathematics at an 8-year private secondary school (“the Private School”) in a Czech city (“Czech City”). His current students are 15-19 years old; occasionally he teaches 1-2 classes of 11-15-year-old students. The CT teaches across 2 campuses of the Private School in Czech City, although another campus also exists in a smaller Czech city. In addition to the Czech national curriculum, one campus in each city offers an IB curriculum for an extra fee. He also facilitates online courses, US Advanced Placement level courses, robotics competitions, and international trips to competitions (including in the US). The CT has never taught nor met the ET or the Student. The Researcher was first put in contact with the CT through snowball sampling and purposely selected him for participation after an informal meeting to represent an experienced Czech advisor and starkly contrast the Student’s and ET’s experiences.

In his second year, the CT assisted the previous Private School head to start a free program for international (mainly UK, US, some European destinations) university preparation (“the university preparation program”). According to the CT, “[the head’s] big dream was to have some picture of our alumni who will be graduate in Harvard or Yale...to use it like PR maybe.” Starting at 15-years old, Private School students are introduced to the Anglophone application process through presentations, with formal preparation activities commencing in their penultimate year (17-years old). The Private School plans information sessions, hosts university speakers, acts as a test center, and provides resources to students on the admissions process, among other activities. The Private School hosts group PS writing and feedback sessions and has hired an external American L1-English teacher to provide email and in-person, small-group feedback to students on specific drafts. LETs, as well as the CT, then provide final feedback. For university entry in AY 2019, about 62

students from all three campuses (approximately 55% of the school population) are engaged in this program. Numerous students from the Private School have attended prestigious Anglophone universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard.

The Admissions Advisor (AA): The AA studied Business at a Czech university and reported winning several awards in L1-Czech student essay writing competitions. He began learning English in secondary school (4 years), then at university, and also worked two summers at American summer camps. After graduation, he worked at a Czech university information center, answering inquiries from interested Czech applicants (18-19-years old). He then held the position of US Admissions Outreach Advisor (about 18 years total) at the US Admissions Outreach Center in Czech City before starting a new job at a Czech national agency for international exchange programs. He has never met nor taught the ET or the Student and was selected for participation based on the Researcher's knowledge of his expertise in US admissions-advising in the Czech national context, specifically with regard to PS writing.

In his role at the US Admission Outreach Center, the AA refined a free program of presentations and workshops on all aspects of the US university admissions process, including PS writing, and provided one-on-one feedback sessions. Outreach efforts also included liaising with and hosting presentations at secondary schools, social media campaigns, organizing US higher education fairs, and other events, mainly in Czech cities. The AA has reportedly worked with thousands of Czech students and with an estimated number of 300-400 students on their PSs over 18 years. In his final year, the AA also facilitated a year-long, in-person group, as promoted by the US Admissions Outreach Center network, for selected, motivated Czech students to prepare for the US admissions process and university study.

3.4.3 The University Gatekeepers

The University Recruiter (UR): The UR graduated from an English university and previously worked in secondary school student careers advising. Her current role (2.5 years) within the central admissions office of an elite UK university, ("UK University")

involves recruiting, conducting outreach, and advising students, specifically in the European region, on the admissions process. She travels to European countries, primarily in April, May, and September, to host school events, as well as around the UK to attend conferences. She offers Skype sessions for international advisors seeking advice on UK University admissions process, and webinars for international students and advisors. The UR helps to organize a two-day annual conference at UK University that is open to a select number of international advisors (selected based on previous application history or projections) to learn more about the admissions process, including PS writing. The UR was selected for inclusion in this study after the Researcher contacted her and learned of her expertise working with European undergraduate applicants during an informal initial meeting.

The University Evaluator (UE): The UE studied philosophy and mathematics in Scotland and gained a doctorate degree (philosophy and theology), and a teaching certificate (mathematics and geography) from an English university. As a postgraduate, he taught adult students at this university. He now teaches philosophy and theology at UK University (about 28 years). He initially worked on continuing student admissions; in his fourth year, he began working as an undergraduate admissions evaluator. The UE oversees evaluation for all interdisciplinary philosophy degrees across all four academic divisions. This involves setting admissions exams, ensuring quality and consistency across evaluators and degrees, and writing a final report at the end of the admissions cycle. In addition, the UE reads and evaluates applications and admissions tests, conducts interviews, and engages in outreach activities, such as speaking at conferences and higher education fairs around the UK, open days at UK University, and the aforementioned advisor conference. The Researcher first was put in contact with the UE through snowball sampling and purposely selected him for participation after determining his extensive expertise and insight into the undergraduate admissions process during an informal initial meeting.

3.5 Research Instruments

Data were collected through individual, semi-structured interviews (Arksey & Knight, 1999, in which some questions are planned, but participants and interviewers can deviate

and explore new areas) in order to guide the inquiry, while elevating the participants' expertise. Semi-structured interviews, particularly when executed with a variety of informants, fittingly allow case study researchers to triangulate overlaps in observation or perception (Stake, 2008). Each interview schedule and supplementary materials were developed as follows.

3.5.1 The Student Interview

The Student Interview Schedule (Appendix D) aimed to capture the Student's experience of the Case as an anchor for analyzing the three research questions. Given that the majority of Student-Researcher interaction in the Case took place via Facebook Messenger chat³, a text-based interview technique (Polio & Friedman, 2016, in which text is used to stimulate participants to recall an event) was selected. The Researcher used content analysis (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor, 2003, in which the meaning and context of a text are analyzed) to determine a message transcript section ("Focus Text"; Appendix E) that would be effective, yet manageable to physically present to the Student to explore the three hypothesized aspects of the Problem (writing instruction, information and resources, and feedback). The Student Interview Schedule was crafted around the Student's messages in Focus Text, which were bolded and highlighted to draw attention. First, background information (e.g. personal and educational history) was elicited. Then, upon introducing and giving the Student time to consider the Focus Text (Pecorari & Shaw, 2012), the Researcher asked questions to elicit the Student's experience that led her to produce specific messages. In this way, all areas of inquiry were tied to the Student's own message productions at the time of the Case to preserve her experience. Finally, the Student was asked to conclude by discussing the impact of her PS writing experience on her current Anglophone university study.

The interview questions interwoven with the Focus Text were inspired by studies that investigated experiences of writing and receiving feedback. For questions about writing history and challenges (Items: 4, 16, 17, 22-24, 27-29), Barton and Hamilton's (2012)

³ Full message transcript can be accessed at: goo.gl/9bQe67

Literacy in the Community interview schedule (created to uncover practices and experiences for developing literacy in reading and writing) was adapted to uncover and determine the impact of the Student's past L1-Czech and L2-English writing experiences. For questions about feedback (Items: 7-10, 14, 25, 26), Lillis and Curry's (2010) text-history interview schedule was used. For questions about perceptions of feedback history (Items: 5, 12, 13, 15, 18-21), Unlu and Wharton's (2015) interview schedule was adapted to focus on PSs.

In addition to the Focus Text, stimulated recall materials (in which materials are presented to evoke responses and gather data) were used to investigate cognitive processes, or gauge perspectives or decision-making (Gass & Mackey, 2000). With stimulated recall instruments, a series of, "structured, but relatively open-ended questions" (Lyle, 2003, p. 863) are posed to participants immediately after viewing materials. Despite the fact that the amount of time between the production of materials and an interview can diminish cognitive process recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000), stimulated recall measures were still selected, based on the research questions' foci on the Student's self-reported reflection, prior and consequential actions, and emotions. However, future PS writing and feedback research could adhere to a more formalized stimulated recall approach.

The stimulated recall materials included a timeline of the Case (Appendix C), the Student's first PS draft (D1; Appendix A), the Researcher's feedback on D1 using Microsoft Word (MS) Track Changes (Appendix F), the Student's second PS draft (D2; Appendix B), and a longer portion of the Facebook Messenger transcript (Appendix G). As detailed in the Student Interview Schedule, the stimuli were presented systematically to align with the Focus Text and follow the Case chronology. The timeline was constructed in order to establish consistency between the Researcher and the Student on the details of the Case and stimulated recall materials. D1 was presented to elicit the Student's experience of writing prior to the Researcher's involvement. The D1 feedback was presented to recall the feedback experience and the feedback mode of MS Track Changes, as was the selected

Facebook Messenger transcript⁴. D2 was presented as a comparison to D1 and to prompt reflection on the writing experience after receiving this feedback.

3.5.2 The Czech Advisor Interviews

The Czech Advisor Interview Schedule (Appendix H) was used in the ET, CT, and AA interviews, based on the conceptualization of their equal location in the semiperiphery with equal access to PS genre knowledge in Figure 1. It comprises sections focused on introduction information, L1-Czech and L2-English writing instruction and feedback, PS advising and feedback, and available resources. This semi-structured interview schedule was developed as a problem-centered interview (Witzel & Reiter, 2012, asking participants to self-report their views on a particular problem), based on the pragmatic emphasis on practitioner voices to investigate the Problem and potential solutions. In a past study of teacher knowledge and perceptions, Brunsmeier (2017) also used a problem-centered interview to connect practice with participants' understanding of a given construct. Consequently, the Czech Advisors Interview Schedule also followed structure of warming the participant to talk about the Problem, before probing their past experience to arrive at conclusions about sources and solutions of the Problem. In the ET interview, a text-based Facebook message component (Appendix I), introduced at the end in a similar style as the Focus Text, was selected as relevant to enrich the experiential component of her self-report and complement the Student's narrative.

3.5.3 The University Gatekeeper Interviews

The University Gatekeeper Interview Schedule (Appendix J) is also a semi-structured, PCI-interview in which question categories included introduction information (e.g. educational and professional history), PS writing and gatekeeping, and advisor roles and resources. Following Chiu's (2015) gatekeeper study about PSs in PhD applications, it included questions about the general application process, PS perceptions, and the application review

⁴ Due to the word limit constraints of this dissertation and the nature of qualitative research (Wolcott, 2009), findings and discussion pertaining to participants' perceptions of feedback modes (in-person meetings, MS Word Track Changes, Facebook Messenger, Skype, email) were deemed during analysis to be tangential to other findings in response to the research questions and subsequently omitted.

process. This interview schedule aimed to interrogate the amount of information about PS writing and evaluation that is disseminated by UK University, provide the basis to compare gatekeepers' perceptions of student and Czech advisor expertise in PS writing with the Czech participants' experiences, and inform the identified pedagogical recommendations.

3.6 Piloting

Interview schedules and stimuli were piloted to ensure that respondents understood the questions as intended, particularly when interviewing L2 and L3-English participants, and to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, comprised of "truth" value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Piloting activities were carried out as outlined in Appendix K.

3.7 Procedure

The Researcher first informally contacted all participants individually by email and then met with them to discuss their experiences related to the Problem. Participants were generally enthusiastic about participating and connecting the Researcher with other relevant contacts. After receiving ethical approval (Section 3.9), the Researcher followed up with each participant by email to confirm interview dates and send them their respective information sheets (Appendix L [Student]; Appendix M [ET]; Appendix N [Local Experts and University Gatekeepers]) and the consent form (Appendix O), prior to any data collection or analysis. No translations were requested. All interviews were conducted in person, in English and audio-recorded using the iPhone application, SuperNote.

Due to the study design (Section 3.3), the Student interview (1 hour and 30 minutes; Appendix P) was conducted first to guide all other inquiry. Before beginning, the Researcher briefly reviewed the purpose of the study and the Student signed her consent form. The interview took place in the Student's university apartment in Scotland with the stimulus materials printed, first placed to the side and then presented between the Researcher and the Student. The interview atmosphere was informal, yielding rich data and introspection.

Next, the Researcher interviewed the two University Gatekeepers in the following two weeks in their respective offices at UK University. Each interview (UR: 43 minutes; UE: 1 hour, 27 minutes; Appendix Q) proceeded smoothly with sufficient time to explore the full University Gatekeeper Interview Schedule.

Finally, the Researcher interviewed the three Czech Advisors (Appendix R) in the Czech Republic over the course of two weeks. The CT interview (1 hour, 8 minutes) took place first in a classroom of one of the Private School campuses. Next, the AA interview (1 hour, 16 minutes) was conducted in the AA's private office. Both interviews proceeded with sufficient time to explore all topics of the Czech Advisor Interview Schedule. Finally, the ET interview (51 minutes) took place in a family residence. The Researcher conducted the interview at the kitchen table, with the stimulus placed to the side and then introduced between the Researcher and the ET. The ET's child was present. All minor disturbances were omitted from the transcript and no explicit influence appears to have affected the data.

All interviews were immediately transferred to a password protected folder on the Researcher's password protected computer. The Researcher listened to the data files on her computer to transcribe and code them (Section 3.8). According to guidelines by Wengraf (2001) all interview data was transcribed manually first into Google Docs, and then uploaded into NVivo for coding. The Researcher listened to the audio files recursively, numerous times to capture detailed language and limited discourse features: pauses (transcribed as commas), trailed off sentences, syntactic shifts, or long pauses (transcribed as dashes) and stressed words (transcribed in bolded italics) to incorporate the emotion of narrative inquiry into the data analysis. Any Czech words (transcribed in bold) were translated (translations placed directly after in parentheses), either based on the Researcher's linguistic knowledge or the online dictionary Slovník.seznam.cz. To maintain a focus on the information presented in a coherent thought process, language was organized into speaker turns. Each informant received a digital PDF copy to review for accuracy and to request any data omission. Only small revisions were made to spelling, grammar, or to further anonymize information.

3.8 Data Analysis

A qualitative analysis approach (Spencer et al., 2003) was selected to best address the research questions that focus on the participants' experiences and perceptions of the Problem and potential solutions. Analysis began immediately, recursively, and dynamically throughout the listening and transcription process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), focusing on the synthesis of narrative and non-narrative content. As data were digested, coding themes evolved along the analytic hierarchy, from descriptive accounts of what occurs to explanatory accounts of why (Spencer et al., 2003). Different types of coding and analysis strategies (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) were selected to address each research question.

3.8.1 Research Question 1

RQ1 called for hypothesis coding (Miles et al., 2014, in which data are coded in alignment with a given hypothesis). NVivo tools were used to tag interview data that related to the three hypothesized areas of the Problem: writing instruction, information and resources, and feedback. Other meta-categories and novel phenomena were identified and flagged as emerging from the data (Chapter 4).

RQ1 findings are presented in the framework of narrative analysis (Benson, 2014): the use and synthesis of non-narrative data to construct a narrative that provides insight to a particular phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1995). Given the lack of existing data and scholarship about the Problem and that narrative construction was not the focus of the study, the participants' self-reports were interpreted as retrospective observations and reflections of the presence and impact of the Problem (Tse, 2000). A narrative analysis approach is appropriate for the instrumental analysis of this case study, to construct an overarching narrative and gain insight into "what the substantive elements of the accounts tell us about the social world" (Elliott, 2005, p. 42) of the Czech secondary school student population. By centering the narrative on the Student Interview data, this analytical framework attempts to construct an understanding for the reader and scholarly community

about the currently problematic social world of Czech secondary school students confronting the Problem.

3.8.2 Research Question 2

RQ2 called for investigation of the scope of input and feedback available to the Student. A descriptive coding strategy (Miles et al., 2014) was first used when analyzing each interview to define and categorize the mentioned types of input and feedback. The preliminary goal was to create an inventory of available sources. The secondary goal was to identify trends or gaps in availability based on the knowledge hierarchy.

Various academic literacies analysis approaches were adopted to construct a picture of what input and feedback the Student received in the Case, and what resources are available to other students in the population. For the Case, a text-history was constructed from the data (Lillis & Curry, 2010), including the number of drafts and interventions of brokers (i.e. people who directly shape text production), and influencers (i.e. people who indirectly shape text production). This case study qualifies as a Medium Text History (Lillis & Curry, 2016, in which two drafts of a text, plus more than one piece of additional data, in the form of feedback and multiple interviews, are available). Then, the more expansive range of input and feedback that were reportedly available to Czech students, as detailed in each interview, were analyzed and conceptualized using a network analysis (Curry & Lillis, 2010), in line with other EAP network analyses (Casanave, 1998; Ferenz, 2005). Following this strategy of mapping nodes of input and feedback, as well as their contextual connections to the writer or teacher, it was possible to see where gaps existed between the Case and the knowledge held by the Local Experts and University Gatekeepers. Finally, by further categorizing the feedback actors in the writing process (Lillis & Curry, 2006) it was possible to identify the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each in shaping different text features.

3.8.3 Research Question 3

RQ3 aimed to determine which desired, available and/or developed practices identified by the participants could be offered as future pedagogical recommendations. This involved triangulating the presence and evaluations of different stakeholders about the effectiveness of input, resources, and feedback through an evaluation coding scheme (Miles et al., 2014). After coding these as positively or negatively evaluated, practices of the Student, Czech Advisors, and University Gatekeepers were cross-referenced with the Student's or Czech advisors' students' reported perceptions to determine pedagogical recommendations (Section 5.3) that would best serve writers experiencing the Problem.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical considerations were accounted for when designing and implementing this study, all of which are described and discussed in detail in Appendix S and Appendix T.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study aimed to describe the Problem based on the experiences of the Student and Czech Advisors; determine what types of input and feedback are available to Czech secondary school students from Czech Advisors and University Gatekeepers; and aggregate pedagogical recommendations based on the Students' preferences, Czech Advisors' best practices, and University Gatekeepers' criteria. This chapter presents findings that emerged from the data analysis pertaining to the three hypothesized areas of the Problem: L1-Czech and L2-English writing instruction, information and resources available, and PS feedback pedagogy. In the pursuit of narrative analysis, the challenges are presented in the order in which the Student encountered them in the Case, before discussing their implications in Chapter 5 (organized by research question).

The data reported come from the Student, English Teacher (ET), Counselor Teacher (CT), Admissions Advisor (AA), University Recruiter (UR), and University Evaluator (UE). According to the aforementioned coding strategies, the main codes that emerged from interview data analysis are detailed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Emergent Codes

Primary Code	Secondary Code	Tertiary Code
Hypothesis: Writing Experience	Czech Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Czech Writing Instruction
	English Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Writing Instruction
	Czech Culture	
	Personal Statement Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content • Language • Timing • Writing About/Promoting Oneself • Structure • Style • Identity • Emotion

	Writing for an Audience	
	Storytelling/Subjectivity vs. Fact/Objectivity	
	Critical Thinking	
	Process Writing	
Hypothesis: Information & Resources	Understanding Authority/ Expectations	
Hypothesis: Feedback Experience	Trust & Doubt	
	Expertise	
	Czech Writing Feedback	
	English Writing Feedback	
Descriptive Coding	Input Source	• See Table 2
	Feedback Source	• See Table 2
	Feedback Mode ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Person Meeting • Skype Meeting • MS Track Changes/Email • Messenger
Evaluative Coding	Positive Pedagogical Recommendations	
	Negative Pedagogical Recommendations	

4.1 Writing Instruction

Regarding writing experience, the Student reported that her Gymnázium L1-writing instruction was limited to, “*in the past 3 years, let’s say it was 2 pieces per year,*” with high expectations for language, style, and content. The ET and AA explained that writing instruction occurs in primary schools for writing stories or learning basic genres; however, because the first long-form production that Czech students write is typically their Master’s thesis, essays are not commonly taught until university. The ET reported that no specific sources or textbooks about Czech writing exist: secondary school students must learn each teacher’s expectations through trial and error. In addition, the AA commented that because the few standards are focused on the product of the genre—to achieve a word count, match an example, and then look for the “*purpose*” afterward—strategies for writing, such as brainstorming or outlining, are not formally taught, other than at a teacher’s personal

⁵ See Footnote 4.

discretion. The ET acknowledged that *“the problem in Czech education system is that it doesn’t emphasize the writing styles and writing approach,”* and as a result, *“[students] are confused and I 100% understand that.”*

The Student perceived her Czech secondary school writing assignments as descriptive or *“literature-based.”* In Czech writing, the AA shared that writers are, *“usually forced not to be too personal and focus on the objective facts,”* and not to use the pronoun, “I.” The CT commented that Czech writing is more like storytelling, complementing the AA’s point that *“[students] usually try to like write and write and write and write. It doesn’t start, it doesn’t end.”* The AA revealed that in Czech writing, the closest thing to the Anglophone essay genre is the *úvaha* (tr: consideration; reflection essay on something, Seznam.cz, 2018), in which the writer considers numerous points of view before arriving at a tentative conclusion—an approach that is, *“completely upside down from what is taught in the US.”*

While the Student had some experience with Anglophone writing about literature in the US, in the EFL Gymnázium context she estimated that she wrote one text per textbook chapter (approximately once per month or month and a half), including *“argumentative, so like pros and cons, or stories, formal and informal letters, you know just the basics,”* and for the Cambridge FCE exam had to write an opinion essay and letter. The ET expressed that EFL instruction is more standardized, with set structures and phrases, which promotes a mutual understanding of expectations between teachers and students, and consistency across teachers. The Student interpreted this instruction as focusing on grammar and writing these genres became the *“boring things of the boring things... it’s grammatically correct, it makes sense, and I get a grade on it.”* Similarly, the Cambridge FCE exam, is assessed based on task completion (content), pragmatic register (communicative achievement), logical organization (organization), and lexical and grammatical accuracy (language) (Cambridge English, 2016). Therefore, in her experience with EFL writing instruction the content did not, *“need to be original, it didn’t need to be interesting, it didn’t need to be special.”* She just needed to have the expected structures and phrases, *“trained.”*

Despite this exposure to writing and writing instruction in both Czech and English and writing an application “letter” in English for her US exchange about her background, the Student, “*never had to write anything like [the PS].*” As she mentioned that Czech university admission is based on entrance examinations, the ET confirmed that no PS materials exist in Czech. In the Gymnázium EFL curriculum, the ET teaches job application letters, but there are no specific PS materials. The Student wished she had known, “*...how to write [the PS]. Is it good to have multiple drafts or versions? ...Or should I make outline first and then write it? Or just like how?*” The Student recalled her understanding of the genre as:

...it was just - write a letter - about yourself - that needs to impress - someone. Needs to present you as the best you could, can, and you have to convince them that they need you and it has to be like grammatically and everything in English correct.

The lack of a tangible judge of the PS genre was confusing and stood in stark contrast to the Student’s Czech culture at home and school, in which, “*It’s just the authority is the authority and if they [parents/teachers] say so, it’s the way.*” Then, combined with the language, she expressed, “*I just couldn’t...write any more or in better way, about myself in the good English.*” Writing about herself in Czech would have been a challenge enough, without the added difficulty of using her L2. The AA and the CT remarked that relatively advanced Czech writing students still struggle to adopt the Anglophone style, even when their “*level of English is quite high.*”

In contrast, the University Gatekeepers offered clear criteria for a UK University PS as focusing on 80% academic content and 20% extracurricular content. According to the UR, PSs should be “*academically-focused, reflective, and honest,*” but there is no “*magic formula,*” because of subject-specific evaluators. The UE described the PS as:

...fundamentally academic. It will treat the word ‘personal’ as tell us about what motivates you, what excites you, what you’ve done in preparation academically for this course...So, a positively good personal statement is...quite openly telling me about their academic personality.

The UR speculated that students coming from educational cultures of rote learning or exams make the mistake of simply listing their achievements to avoid this personal aspect, but then do not demonstrate any independent ability to think critically. The AA supposed that Czech students do this based on the most comparable Czech genre of a job application “*motivation letter*,” which is structured as a list-like CV that promotes an objective style without deeply investigating any one accomplishment. As a result, the CT observed that students produce PSs that read as a “*very nice story about me*,” but the focus, argument, and depth of the story’s substance are missing.

Thinking about her strengths was one of the Student’s biggest barriers because she felt, “*I didn’t know myself that much*.” The AA found self-reflection beyond clichés as challenging for students in his PS workshops as, “*they didn’t realize that [the writing] must touch them to make it persuasive or like to make it as a strong [PS]... it must touch their soul*.” He therefore recommended that students write diaries to practice writing and begin reflection. The Student attributed the challenge of writing about her strengths to:

It’s Czech culture... that you’re not the best, you don’t know the best. If you brag, it’s a bad thing. We don’t have something that’s called you know, healthy confidence. I think that’s a part of Communism thinking...if you stand out it’s a kind of bad thing. It’s just how the Czech system works, even in education.

Similarly, the AA proposed that because of Communism, “[Czechs] don’t like to talk about themselves and their private life or their internal life because they, it’s not considered polite.” The Student’s emotions of panic and anxiety about the genre, as well as “*having the attitude of Czech person*,” prevented her from feeling confident in the content and language to characterize her different strengths.

In summary, when the Student confronted the Problem in the Case, she was challenged by her background of L1-Czech and L2-English writing instruction, Czech writing, and Czech culture, because each conflicted with different features of the PS genre. As her emotional response began, she sought input to clarify these conflicts.

4.2 Information and Resources Available

The second hypothesized challenge for the Student and local advisors was that of the information and resources (input) available according to their position in the PS genre knowledge hierarchy (Figure 1). A list of the codes that emerged from each interview as a source of PS input or feedback can be found in Table 2. Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 presents the participants' knowledge networks (Wellman, Carrington, & Hall, 2008, i.e. personal communities that convey the value of resources) of input and feedback and attend to available input findings. Available feedback findings are discussed in Section 4.3.

TABLE 2: Research Question Two Descriptive Coding

		Participants					
Codes	Definition	Student	English Teacher (ET)	Counselor Teacher (CT)	Admissions Advisor (AA)	University Recruiter (UR)	University Evaluator (UE)
University	Anglophone universities	X	X	X	X	X	X
Application Website (UCAS/ Common Application)	Websites that administer Anglophone university applications	X		X	X	X	X
Student's School (as an entity)	Secondary schools		X	X	X	X	X
English Teacher	Local EFL teachers	X	X	X	X	X	X
Other Teacher	Other teachers in the semiperiphery	X		X	X	X	X
Guidance Counselor	School-based advisors that guide on post-secondary school options			X		X	X

Government Agency	Government-sponsored organizations that advise on university admissions			X	X		X
Native Speaker	L1-English speakers	X	X	X	X		X
Family/ Friends	A student's family member or personal friends				X		X
YouTube Videos	Videos published on YouTube	X		X	X		
Google/ Websites	Online webpages found independently or via Google search engine	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Media	e.g. Facebook	X		X	X		
Conferences	All conference environments			X			X
Books	Hardcopy books on the admissions process			X	X		
Newspapers/ Magazines	Hardcopy or digital newspaper or magazine publications			X	X		
Samples	Sample PSs	X	X	X	X		
Partner School	Affiliated Anglophone secondary schools			X			

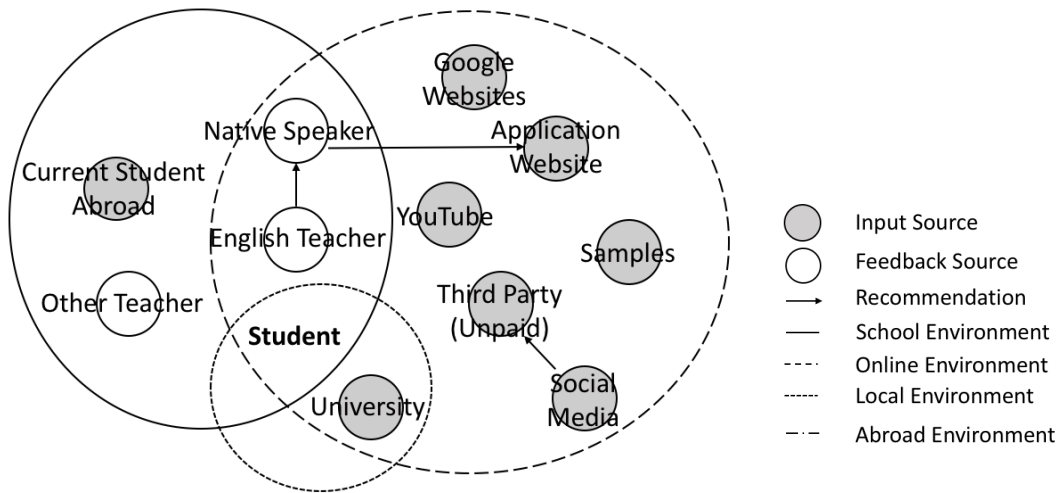
Summer Camp	Summer university preparation programs			X			
Third Party (Paid)	Private companies that charge a fee for admissions guidance				X	X	X
Third Party (Unpaid)	Private companies that do not charge a fee for admissions guidance	X					
Private Foundation	Private local foundations that award study abroad scholarships			X			
Peer Applicants	Other applicants going through the admissions process			X			
Current Students Abroad	Friends or known students who are currently studying in Anglophone contexts	X		X	X		

4.2.1 Knowledge Networks

The Student's network (Figure 2) shows that she used online sources to research the PS and Anglophone admissions process. On Facebook (coded: Social Media), the Student reported finding videos about PS writing distributed by a Czech-admissions advising agency called Unilink (coded: Third Party [Unpaid]). She had contacted Unilink in early Autumn 2016 but did not use their services because she wanted to apply to universities beyond their partners. From school, the Student mentioned a friend who was studying

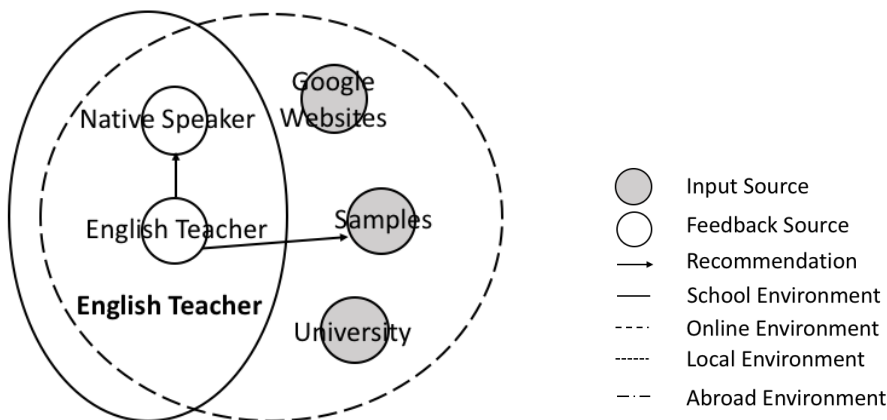
abroad (coded: Current Student Abroad), who had initially motivated the Student to apply. At a local higher education fair, the Student had also met with some UK universities and then researched their websites.

FIGURE 2: Student Network



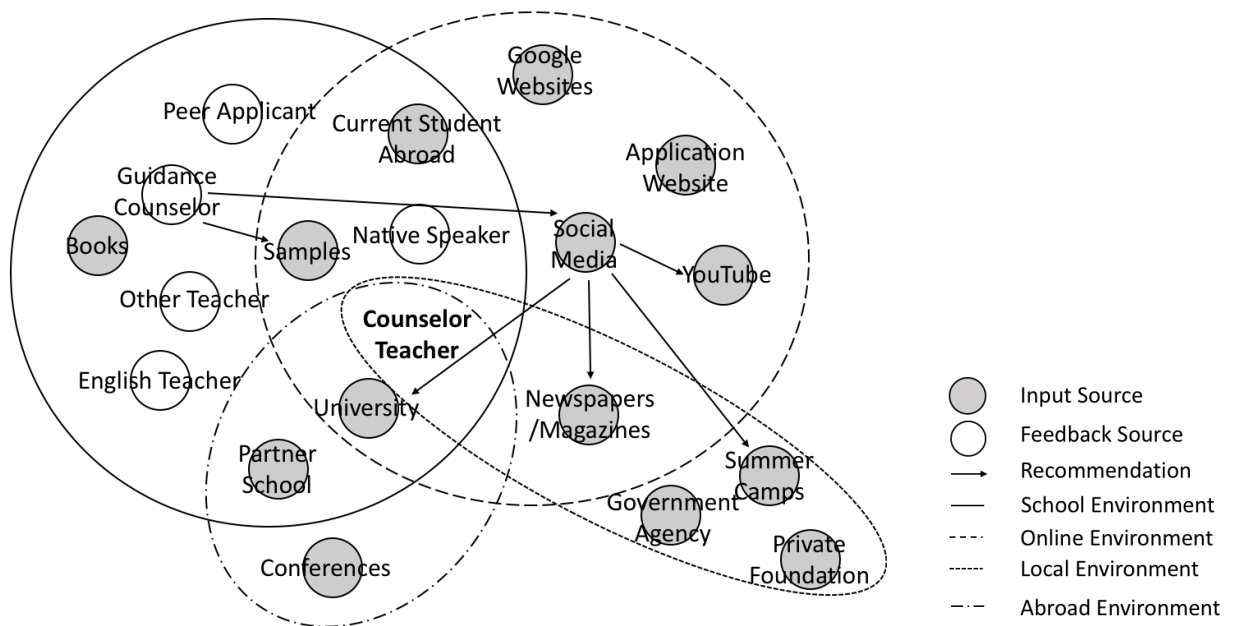
The ET’s network (Figure 3) reflects that only a few Gymnázium students per year (about 0.8% of the Student’s graduating year) apply abroad and might ask different teachers for support, so the ET has not developed or maintained her limited Anglophone admissions knowledge. As a result, after only a few weeks of online research in the Case, she imagined that with more time, “*it would be better.*” The ET remembered that she “*was definitely not ready*” to assist the Student and felt, “*I couldn’t say, ‘I know that.’ I always had to say only, ‘I think that - maybe.’*”

FIGURE 3: English Teacher Network



In contrast, the CT (coded: Guidance Counselor) works with about 55% of the Private School students to apply abroad each year. He had to “*start just like from the zero,*” to build his current network of expertise (Figure 4) and estimated that, “*if you are reading a lot and asking a lot so after 2, 3 years you can know quite a lot about the system and how it works.*” This process involved lengthy meetings with other local experts (the AA [coded: Government Agency] and a Private Foundation); online and through school visits from Anglophone universities; travel abroad to conferences and universities; and observing the contracted native speaker. The CT therefore confidently reported the PS difference between the UK focus on the University Gatekeeper’s 80:20 ratio of academic and extracurricular content and the US focus on holistic fit with the university (Stevens, 2009). He is now able to guide students to determine what is both valuable to them and universities through publishing guidebooks in Czech for Private School students and parents, and by using Facebook groups to distribute and promote frequent engagement with admissions process input or to recommend an admissions summer camp.

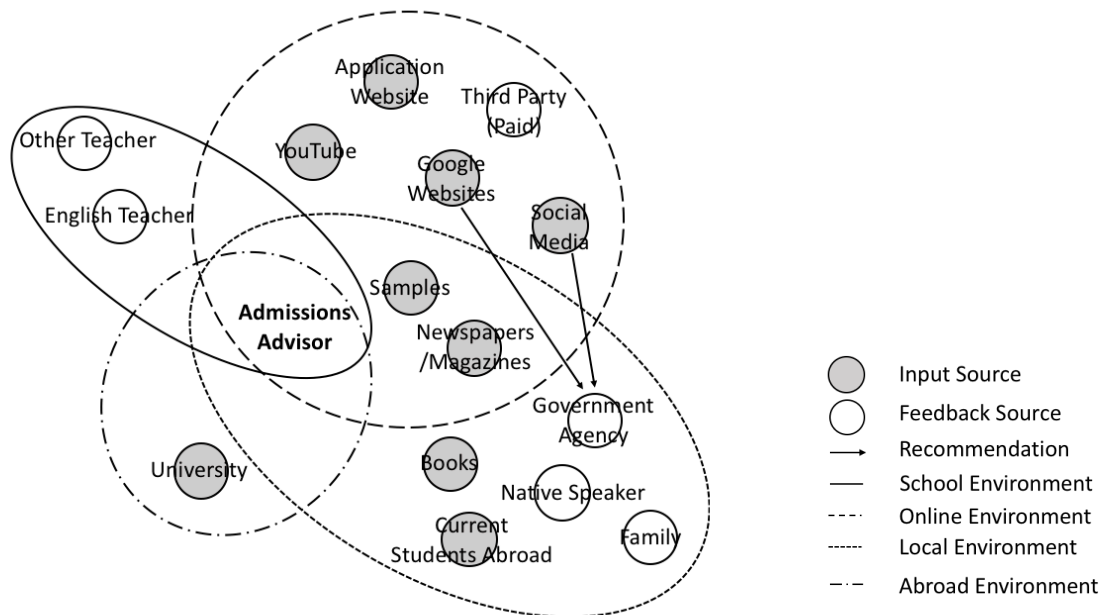
FIGURE 4: Counselor Teacher Network



The AA’s network (Figure 5) reflects that after 18 years working with thousands of students, he had developed confident knowledge of what a US university gatekeeper

expects and, “*feel [what] is happening and what’s not [in a PS].*” From initial training with the US Admissions Outreach Center network (coded: Government Agency) and speaking with American interns and a Czech collaborator who had studied abroad, he developed a workshop program and resource library. The AA mentioned that the Government Agency posts input and conducts outreach about services on their Facebook page and website, as Czech secondary schools can be hesitant to liaise with outside agencies.

FIGURE 5: Admissions Advisor Network



The imagined networks of international applicants to UK University were constructed based on the UR (Figure 6) and UE (Figure 7) interviews (representing what these university gatekeepers believe are the PS input and feedback nodes available to Czech secondary school students). For the UR-imagined Student Network, input and feedback are accessible in the school, local, and online environments, with Anglophone universities present in each. Fewer online resources were mentioned, other than the UK University website and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service website (UCAS; coded: Application Website), as she doubted the information on other advising websites. The UE-imagined Student Network is somewhat broader and includes the ‘Abroad Environment’

after meeting international applicants at UK student conferences. Locally, the UE imagined a government agency (similar to that of the AA) that might provide information on Anglophone admissions.

FIGURE 6: University Recruiter-imagined Student Network

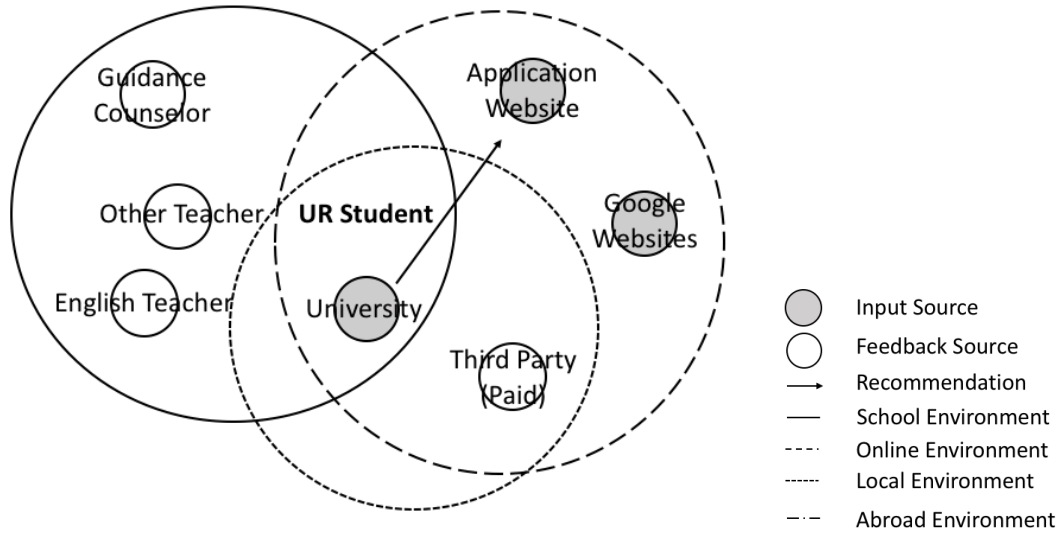
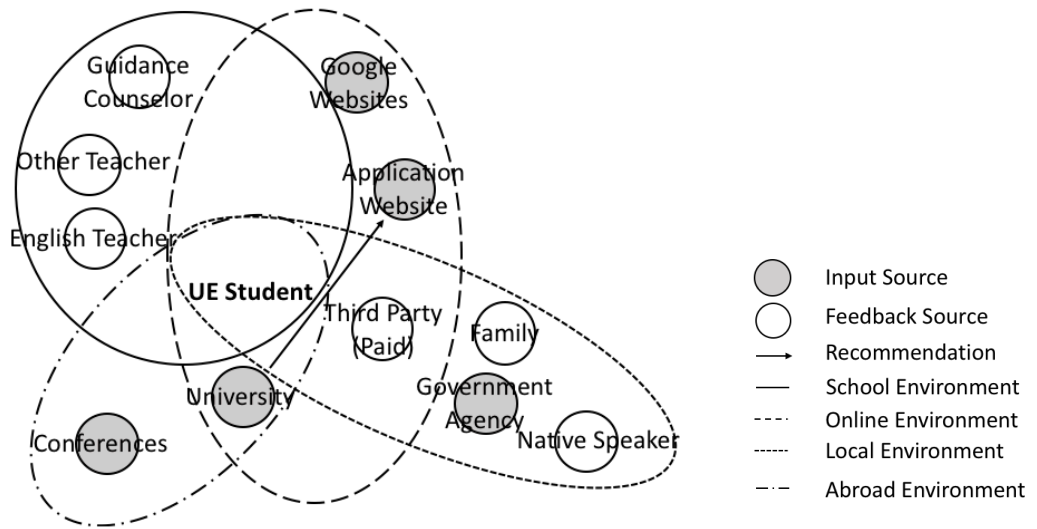


FIGURE 7: University Evaluator-imagined Student Network



In summary, Table 3 presents the differences in absolute numbers of input and feedback sources and contexts for real or imagined students in each of the informants’ knowledge networks. The similar number of input sources in the Student, CT, and AA Networks that surpass those imagined in the UR and UE-imagined Networks align with the UE’s observation that international students are highly motivated to research the PS genre and application process. However, the stark difference in number of input sources between the ET, and CT and AA Networks, reflects the UE’s worry about students coming from “*uncomprehending*” schools (i.e. the Gymnázium), or those that infrequently send applications and/or do not access published resources and therefore cannot adequately support students in the application process, versus “*comprehending*” schools (i.e. the Private School). The extent to which this difference was a factor of time and/or local environment is discussed in Section 5.2.1.

TABLE 3: Input and Feedback Sources in Networks

		Knowledge Networks					
		Student	English Teacher (ET)	Counselor Teacher (CT)	Admissions Advisor (AA)	UR-Student	UE-Student
Sources	Input	8	3	14	9	3	5
	Feedback	3	2	5	6	4	6
Environments		3	2	4	4	3	4

4.2.2 Specific Input Nodes

Within the participants’ knowledge networks, a number of key input nodes emerged as particularly influential. The University Gatekeepers cited credible online sources available via the UCAS application and university websites, webinars, and Skype meetings. Yet, the UR reflected that at the annual UK University advisor conference, attendees always request PS writing information, despite the online resources available. While the CT initially did online research to identify university expectations and genre features, he supplemented this

input by attending conferences and meeting with Anglophone universities. Excluding the ET, all UK-oriented informants mentioned the UCAS application website. The Student found it helpful to find sample PSs and determine the content and structure, but the UCAS website tool (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2018) to brainstorm, draft, and structure the PS was not useful for her because:

Oh my god, that was so awful. I hated how it was separated...You know, if you write one separate thing and then you write a different thing about a totally different subject it doesn't connect.

The CT also expressed that UCAS was one of his first sources of input, including a short video; however:

...if you watch this clip, I don't think so that you are able to write during next week quite good personal statement because I think that this criticism and some discussion about your personal statement is quite important too.

Therefore, although online input sources were a good starting point, the AA summarized that, “*even if you know the theory and you understand the theory you must do writing. So, you learn writing by writing, there's no other way...*”

Universities were a source of input for all Czech participants; however, the difference between the node's location in the online, local, or abroad contexts for the Student, ET, and AA contrasts with its location in the “comprehending” school environment of the CT. Both University Gatekeepers stated that their teams focus on PS content, despite acknowledging that language can be an issue for EFL students for the PS and general application. The University Recruiter (UR) observed that students often use overly complex vocabulary or syntax, instead of focusing on communicating meaning with impact. The University Evaluator (UE) assumes that EFL learners' PSs are edited, but a higher level of English in a PS might be a giveaway of too much broker interference. However, he further recommended that schools should provide input (and feedback) on both PS content and language.

All Czech Advisors (the ET, CT, and AA) mentioned sample PSs as input. One use was to develop an understanding of the genre. The ET remembered reviewing “*hundreds of examples and I made some notes- what I like, what I didn’t like, some phrases...*” The CT read many samples initially to “*to understand how it works, what to write it in, and so on...*” and to use as a basis for discussion with university gatekeepers. The AA also looked at samples in books to understand the variety and adaptability of the genre to each student’s personal story. A second use of samples was to make theoretical PS input more digestible for students. For example, the CT shows students good and bad samples to demonstrate, “*what to put there, what not, and how to write it and what is most, most important.*” The AA found that this was more effective than theory to provide, “*the biggest shortcut to come to the right point*”; however, both admitted that some students might not understand until they wrote a draft.

In summary, the availability of online, university, and samples as input were useful starting points for further PS writing practice, feedback, and supplemental genre input at school. The Student wished for this teacher input to include encouragement, and information about the context, focus, and style as a natural progression of EFL instruction. The AA added that this genre-specific knowledge is necessary for teachers to judge a good PS from a good essay. The ET said that to provide this support, she would require a student’s book that included examples, basic information, the structure, the goals, as well as scenario prompts. A complementary teacher’s book then would focus on the methodology of how to demonstrate, support, correct mistakes, and most importantly, “*how to **feel**, like my feelings, that I am expert. That I know **how**.*” The ET recommended that it would be, “*even much better than a book,*” to have a seminar with Anglophone teachers to learn their methods and try to write the genre. The ET then envisioned starting an elective PS class, similar to the Private School’s university preparation program.

Yet in the Case, the Student commented that, “... [*language teachers*] are not ready for this. Because if your English teacher are not able to help you to get to British university, who is supposed to help you?” The ET observed that, “*the state schools here... they think only about the students going to like continuing in our educational system;*” for example,

the Student commented that Gymnázium biology teachers even hold mock Czech university entrance exams. The AA summarized that Czech schools might:

...[not] really think that it's important to support students they want to study abroad. So, they said, 'Ok so you want to study abroad it's your business...we either don't want to or we don't have capacity to help you.'

Therefore, based on the input she received from her research and this “uncomprehending” school environment, the Student was left to feel, “... *so lost, I had no idea what I'm doing. And it was so important to me that it didn't help.*”

4.3 Feedback

The third hypothesized area of the Problem was unstructured PS feedback. At the Gymázium, the Student's impression was that, “*we don't receive feedback on what to do and how to [write] - you know, it's either bad or it's good.*” In English classes, the English Teacher (ET) affirmed an emphasis on grammar by describing her correction style of highlighting errors. She also uses an annotation for stylistic errors, but conceded, “*Sometimes they get it, sometimes they don't.*” She typically prints, annotates, and writes some notes at the bottom of students' writing assignments, before going over general errors with the whole class. Students then have the opportunity to revise formative assignments, but she observed that this is uncommon. In summary, the Admissions Advisor (AA) speculated that the in-depth PS feedback he would give, “*for [Czech students], it was like new experience.*”

4.3.1 Feedback Brokers and Influencers

In Table 4, a text history (Lillis & Curry, 2010) of the Case PS was constructed according to the Student and ET interviews. In this analysis, ‘author’ (A) is operationalized as the primary writer, ‘broker’ (B) as a feedback-provider and ‘influencer’ (I) as someone who the Student turned to for guidance before writing. Before writing her initial draft (DI), the Student approached the ET for assistance (I1) and had discussed her plan to apply to an Anglophone university with the aforementioned Current Student Abroad (I2). The

feedback she received to write subsequent drafts (DII, DIII, Submitted Draft) came from the brokers of the English Teacher (B1), her Economics teacher (B2; coded: Other Teacher), and the Researcher (B3; coded: Native Speaker).

TABLE 4: Case PS Text History

	I1= English Teacher I2= Current Student Abroad		A= Student		A=Student B1=English Teacher B2= Other Teacher		A=Student B1=English Teacher B3=Native Speaker		A= Student
Written texts discussed	D0	→	DI	→	DII (Appendix A: “Draft 1”)	→	DIII (Appendix B: “Draft 2”)	→	Submitted Draft

The different roles that categories of Brokers or Influencers in Table 4 either played in the Case or were imagined to play by the Local Experts and University Gatekeepers relating to different PS features were then compiled in Table 5 (Lillis & Curry, 2006).

TABLE 5: Orientations of Brokers Involved in the Student’s Academic Text Production

Category of Broker	Broker Comment/Action	Orientation
NONPROFESSIONAL: Current Student Abroad/ Family/Friends		
<i>Example 1: Student</i>	She said a sentence, “What people like us will do in Czech? We don’t fit in.” And it just like really shook me because I knew that she’s right, like I’m not that type of person.	Content
<i>Example 2: Counselor Teacher</i>	And also we are trying to connect our former students or alumni who are	Context

	<p>studying somewhere with our current students... they can speak about university and program and...what does it mean to live in UK or US and so on.</p> <p>And typically the students who wants to study in the UK, US they are typically contacting much more students who are studying there...and they are discuss the topic with more people because one is not enough.</p>	Content
<i>Example 3: Admissions Advisor</i>	If they had some friends or relatives in the US, or you know like students they knew, so they usually [turn] to them.	Language
<i>Example 4: University Evaluator</i>	I don't see why that family members are not perfectly respectable people to help by pointing out issues with language and suggesting alternatives.	Language
ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL: Other Teacher		
<i>Example 1: Student</i>	Because I had to check with her, if, as, from the Economics and Business point of view ...so I was asking her, do you think that I'm showing enough passion for the subjects? Would you be interested in the way that I'm writing about it?	Content Context
<i>Example 2: Counselor Teacher</i>	I don't know maybe that I'm young, and I can speak a little bit English, and I can study something so maybe this, this was the reasons why [the previously head of Private School] decided to ask me if I would like to [start the university preparation program].	General Support
<i>Example 3: University Recruiter</i>	Because I think teachers are our best ambassadors... But if you've got teachers who going to be kind of consistent within schools, within countries who can kind of share information within their schools, and within their regions, then that's, that's very, extremely helpful...	General Support
<i>Example 4: University Evaluator</i>	And I think increasingly international teachers are paying attention to [UCAS resources]. So that even if the pupils don't go and read it themselves, that they have	Context

	<p>proper guidance because it's been guided by the formal process.</p> <p>So, I suspect that they get help, in [English independent schools], from teachers, from non-classroom teachers, deputy heads and so forth, there may even be a university admissions coordinator who has that as a very high-profile part of their role.</p>	General Support
LANGUAGE PROFESSIONAL: Local English Teacher (LET)		
<i>Example 1: Student</i>	Grammar, mainly grammar. Not much what should I write, in a way, how should I write it.	Language
<i>Example 2: English Teacher</i>	<p>And then she sent it to me and first I corrected it, which was quite easy, because she doesn't do a lot of mistakes.</p> <p>So I wrote her what she could add to make it more attractive and like to sound the correct student to be accepted.</p>	Language Style Context
<i>Example 3: Counselor Teacher</i>	And after that our English department is reading it again and they are also doing some corrections, and some small grammar corrections or they are reading it and trying to little bit improve the style like, not the content, but style.	Language Style
<i>Example 4: Admissions Advisor</i>	I think they really considered the knowledge of English, you know as a primal qualification. So like usually the English teacher was the first person...	Language
<i>Example 5: University Recruiter</i>	I think countries maybe it would be a more particular teacher, often it can be the English teacher, or a teacher who just for some kind of circumstance has got links to, or has knowledge of the UK system...	Context
LANGUAGE PROFESSIONAL: Native Speaker (NEST)		
<i>Example 1: Student</i>	It was just all of it but mainly the context, mainly the style and I wish [teachers at school] would tell me.	Context Style

	<p>Because [the Researcher’s feedback] wasn’t just about grammar, it wasn’t just about moving things, but it was also was about what is this exactly about? What do you write in it? You know like the plot of my life.</p> <p>So the structure, I moved the information according to the topic or the area.</p> <p>I knew that your culture, that you’re American. And I knew that...you were working for something that was dealing with these kind of application... that you have experience with these kinds of things and how to write them.</p>	<p>Content</p> <p>Structure</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Process</p>
<i>Example 2: English Teacher</i>	<p>...the best way is always native speaker because of mistakes and everything. So this is when I told her, “Ok, write Researcher she can help you because she wrote it because she can make different suggestions or even say that my suggestions were wrong.”</p>	<p>Language</p> <p>Content</p>
<i>Example 3: Counselor Teacher</i>	<p>...the lady she knows how to write it and what would be in the essay if you are applying in US or in Great Britain</p> <p>At the beginning, style. And more information, be more detailed and sometimes, do not write there your grades because they will see it in another part of your application.</p>	<p>Process</p> <p>Content</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Style</p> <p>Content</p>
<i>Example 4: Admissions Advisor</i>	<p>So there are several gymnáziums... that I think emphasize on [Anglophone university preparation]. And some of them even have like foreigners that teach students on this specific.</p>	<p>General Support</p>

Nonprofessional: Current Student Abroad/Family/Friends: Beyond influencing content, as in the Case, the Counselor Teacher (CT) brought up Private School alumni abroad as sources of PS context. The AA and University Evaluator (UE) also mentioned English-speaking family members or those from Anglophone cultures as sources of linguistic support. Family and friends can therefore have diverse roles as influencers and brokers.

Academic Professional: Other Teacher: The Student approached her Economics teacher to determine if her PS content aligned with general Business Management university course expectations. The CT and University Gatekeepers spoke of wider roles of other teachers who understand the PS context.

Language Professional: Local English Teacher: While the Student looked to the ET only for grammar, the ET admitted that after initial linguistic feedback, her suggestions on style, context, and some content could be wrong. Meanwhile, the CT and AA confirmed that LETs are mainly a source of linguistic or stylistic knowledge, but not content or context. In contrast, both University Gatekeepers speculated that LETs are likely to provide feedback with an understanding of the PS context.

Language Professional: Native Speaker: The Student turned to the Researcher, based on her approachability and professional experience for help with the non-linguistic PS aspects: content, context, structure, process and style. The ET also felt the Researcher, as a native speaker, could provide final support with the language and verification of content suggestions as matching university expectations. The CT shared that the contracted native speaker's feedback guides students in the university preparation program to dive deeper into their initial stories and pull out their critical evaluations and concrete proof to show, not just tell. The AA estimated that such native English speaker teachers (NESTs; Copland et al., 2016) are specifically hired by schools to develop similar programs.

4.3.2 Feedback Experience

According to the Case PS Text History and Student Network, the Student received feedback from 3 sources. From the feedback in her “uncomprehending” School Environment (Table 4: B1, B2), the Student's confidence in her own input dropped so low that she felt, “*I wouldn't make it because I just didn't know.*” In contrast, Private School students have the opportunity to receive feedback from five sources in the “comprehending” CT Network School Environment. To mediate this gap, the University Gatekeepers rejected that universities could provide feedback, but opposed that students would need to pay Third Party (Paid) sources.

In the Case, recognizing the ET's feedback as "uncomprehending," in that it did not align with her Student Network input, the Student turned to the Researcher for "comprehending" feedback:

It was obvious that you knew what you are talking about...you didn't hesitate and that was big deal for me because I was hesitating myself. I didn't need to look at another person hesitating with me.

The AA cited a learning curve of challenges for Czech students to overcome when receiving "comprehending" PS feedback:

You know the concept of like writing about themselves. That was like, ok what should I write about? And should not be the list of achievements. And then and because Czechs, Czech writing is not that much taught in schools, so they don't really, people don't really think about structure of the writing.

The Local Experts acknowledged that these dramatic transformations require time. Whereas at the Private School, this learning curve occurs through six-seven rounds of feedback in small group sessions, and one large group session with the NEST, in the Case, it was condensed into several days after contacting the Researcher.

On the final day that the Student and Researcher worked together, the ET wrote to the Researcher that the Student was "desperate," and she feared that the Student would not submit her application. The Student felt that the Researcher's feedback was pushing her write a completely different PS because every aspect of her (Table 4: DII) grammar, content, and structure were "completely wrong." She reported "crying [her] eyes out," to the point where these emotions of exhaustion, stress, and panic clouded her ability to respond to the Researcher's feedback and comments on what was "valuable in [her] life." The CT and ET used samples to justify the need for more concrete examples as the CT observed that, "...very often the students they don't know that or... how to explain it, the best way," in that they do not evaluate or analyze their experiences. The AA noted that students often resisted cutting what he considered unimportant "gravy," after they had worked hard to write or had received positive, yet "uncomprehending" feedback from their English teachers or family members. The ET speculated that this notion of competing

authorities, in a pressured time resulted in that, "... [the Student] was confused and it was, it was just too much for her." When comparing DII and DIII (Table 4) though, the Student recognized that, "It's not different piece, it's not different information, it's just what is important and where to put it and how to write it better."

Upon overcoming her emotions, submitting her application, and gaining acceptance to study in Scotland, the Student reflected on what she learned from the PS feedback process. Firstly, she reported that it prepared her to overcome her "Czech attitude," self-evaluate, and develop "emotional intelligence" in support of her strengths. She has since written similarly self-reflective and promotional genres to apply for numerous positions. Secondly, developing her PS content revealed important aspects of the Student's identity. Thirdly, she commented on the PS as an exercise in critical thinking, which in the Czech Republic, "is a disaster," according to the ET. Finally, the Student claimed that in preparation for studying at an Anglophone university, writing the PS "got me to the mindset of writing." The AA affirmed that learning the principles and process through his feedback was useful for Czech students in other settings, "Especially in the country where you don't practice writing."

This section reported the sources and topics of feedback in the Case, and received by Czech students in the Private School, in cooperation with the AA, and in the imagined settings of the University Gatekeeper-networks. Feedback from the Researcher, CT, and AA as "comprehending" was reported as challenging for Czech students to think critically about their personal experiences. The need to address this unfamiliar feedback in a pressured amount of time was emotional for the Student.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study aimed to explore the problem of writing PSs for undergraduate Anglophone admissions, as faced by a Czech secondary school student. This chapter discusses the findings in response to the three research questions and the hypotheses that guided data collection and analysis in the context of existing research. In the spirit of pragmatist inquiry, key findings and limitations are posited as strengths and weaknesses of potential solutions to the Problem as outlined previously.

5.1 Research Question 1

RQ1: What were a Czech secondary school student's and Czech advisors' experiences writing and giving feedback on personal statements for Anglophone admissions?

RQ1 aimed to uncover what took place in the Case of the Student writing a PS for Anglophone admissions and to complement her experience with those of the Czech advisor informants: the English Teacher (ET), Counselor Teacher (CT), and Admissions Advisor (AA). The interview data revealed that the six features of the PS genre (“PS features”) that the participants’ cited as specifically challenging and requiring feedback attention spanned all of the genre knowledge types (Tardy, 2009): the rhetorical (“the context” or the expectations of the Anglophone gatekeepers as the target discourse community), the subject-matter (“the content”), the formal (“the structure,” “the language,” and “the style”) and the process (“the process”). The acquisition and integration of these as genre expertise can be said to comprise what the University Evaluator (UE) called, “comprehending” input or feedback for the PS genre. The Student and Czech advisors’ experiences developing this genre expertise through writing and giving or receiving feedback on PSs are discussed in Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 respectively.

5.1.1 Writing Experiences

The Czech participants’ PS writing and advising experiences revealed conflicts between Czech students’ sociocultural and educational backgrounds and the PS features, which hindered their PS writing abilities. Two of these background characteristics aligned with

the hypothesized challenges of L1-Czech and L2-English writing instruction, while two others, Czech culture and the L1-Czech writing style, emerged from the findings. The extent to which each conflicted with different PS features is summarized in Table 6 and discussed in this section.

TABLE 6: Case Background Challenges vs. PS Features

Case Challenges		Personal Statement Genre Features					
		Content	Language	Process	Context	Structure	Style
Hypothesized	Czech (L1)-Writing Instruction			X	X		
	English (L2)-Writing Instruction	X	X		X		
Not-Hypothesized	Czech (L1) Writing	X				X	X
	Czech (C1) Culture	X			X		

As language (Holliday, 2010) and pedagogy (Bruner, 1996) have been cited as reflections of culture within a sociocultural framework (Moore, 2012), the Student’s Czech culture (C1) will be discussed first as a challenge for the PS context and content. In contrast to the clear, “traditional authority,” held by teachers and parents (Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 6), that is characteristic of Communist era top-down cultures (Webber, 2001), the Student was frustrated by a lack of context from gatekeepers or teachers in her Student Network about PS evaluation criteria. The Student’s resulting negative emotions of panic, anxiety, and

frustration have been demonstrated by other students who do not find authority where expected (Andrade & Du, 2005, 2007). This C1 emphasis on authority has been documented across educational contexts as a barrier to critical thinking (Iyer, 2010; Kleinig, 2018; Sweeney, 1986); a desired and culturally-constructed concept (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995), which PS gatekeepers interpret as a demonstration of cognition, as well as moral and social development (Paley, 1996; Shpeizer, 2018). Further, the reported C1 characteristics that self-promotion is impolite, and personal privacy should be maintained conflict with the PS as a promotional genre (R.M. Brown Jr., 2005; Shuker, 2014). Therefore, the Student's C1 particularly disadvantaged her to confront the "rhetorical paradox" of the PS (Paley, 1996): that writers must demonstrate self-reflective emotional literacy, under pressure, to an intangible audience.

The findings that L1-writing conventions are at odds with the PS content, style, and structure can be explained by contrastive rhetoric research. Czech writing, compared to Anglophone writing, is stylistically writer-oriented and therefore features less critical, and more descriptive content (Chamonikolasová, 2005). This L1-rhetorical style has been found to transfer to L2 writing in a passive authorial identity (Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 2012; Kobayashi, 1984; McKinley, 2013) in line with Ivanič and Camps' (2001) claim that how one asserts authorial identity in L2 writing is inextricable from their L1 conventions. The L1-writer-oriented style also yields subjective structuring based on writers' thought processes (Chamonikolasová & Stašková, 2005), which includes digressions, repetitions, and a lack of introduction and previewing, in contrast to Anglophone academic writing (Čmejrková & Daneš, 1997). Swales (1990) has linked prior writing experience in these forms of information structures, rhetorical elements, and style (i.e. those of the "*motivation letter*" or *úvaha*) to their recognition and production in new L2-genres. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Student faced difficulty to overcome her background in L1-Czech writing to assert a strong, self-aggrandizing personality to a specific audience in her PS (K. Hyland, 2012), based on the gatekeepers' Anglophone discourse conventions (Čmejrková & Daneš, 1997).

L1-writing instruction presented particular problems for Czech students' understanding of the PS context and writing process. In addition to the traditional authority that the Student expected because of her C1, the ET also revealed the importance of individual teachers' "professional authority," to judge subject knowledge and skill (Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 7) in the L1-writing classroom. This emphasis on authority is embedded in a logic-grammatical and genre-focused, rather than a communicative approach, in the L1 classroom (Šmejkalová & Štěpaník, 2016; Reichelt, 2005). However, the Local Experts' and Student's recommendations of brainstorming, outlining, and multiple drafts recall a process writing approach (Bayat, 2014, i.e. involving recursive stages of prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing over time). The lack of process writing in L1-writing instruction is reflected in other top-down educational cultures (Pennington, Brock, & Yue, 1996; Sengupta & Falvey, 1998; Yang & Gao, 2013), which conflict with the pedagogy's implicit cultural assumptions of individual expression/experimentation and contextual knowledge (Inghilleri, 1989). The incompatibility of L1-writing instruction with this "Western approach," (Bloom, 2008, p. 104)—which the ET mentioned is present in EFL textbooks—cautions against Anglophone-publishers presuming that EFL students and teachers have a L1-process writing pedagogy foundation before introducing new L2 genres.

Despite her L2-writing instruction in the Czech Republic, US, and for the Cambridge FCE Exam, the Student still felt unprepared for the PS context, content, and language. The findings and description of her writing experiences in the Czech-EFL context indicate an alignment with a SFL, rather than an EAP genre-based approach to writing (Frydrychova Klimova 2014a; K. Hyland, 2002) and an emphasis on form over meaning (Forbes, 2018; Heilenman, 1991). The Student's complaint that she lacked the vocabulary or syntactic complexity to express the critical self-reflection demanded by the genre confirms Dewaele's (2005) findings about limited emotional vocabulary in L2 students' repertoires and a problem of descriptive writing found in some reflective journal studies (L1 or L2-English not specified) (Dyment & O'Connell, 2011). This combination of conditioning in her L2-writing instruction to focus on language, with insecurity about her linguistic capacity to meet the emotional demands of the PS explains the Student's preoccupation

with transcription, at the expense of composition (Clachar, 1999; Hayes, 2012; Smith, 1982).

Thus, the Student and Czech advisors' PS writing experiences reflect the consequences of how the reported realities of C1 culture, L1 writing, and L1- and L2-writing instruction conflicted with the PS context, content, structure, style, process, and language. Through a pragmatist lens, these conflicts can be considered as sources of the Problem that set the stage for the Student's emotional, uphill battle to develop her discursal self when writing the PS genre.

5.1.2 Feedback Experiences

The Student received PS-genre-expertise-deficient feedback from her Student Network compared to if she had been a Private School student (in its university preparation program) or had contacted the Admissions Advisor (who offered workshops and one-on-one conferences for students applying to the USA). As the PS is heavily embedded in the Anglophone discourse community (Swales & Feak, 1994), teacher feedback has an important role to scaffold students' development of authorial voice according to the specific discourse conventions (K. Hyland & F. Hyland, 2006). In the Czech context, where students' trust in teachers' support as pedagogical authority is prominent (Harjunen, 2009), the Student's request for the Researcher's feedback indicates that her Czech brokers failed to mediate her learning through validation of her writing efforts (I. Lee, 2014), or move her through the Vygotskian ZPD (Kinginger, 2002) to produce the PS genre. Whereas time is needed for progress (I. Thompson, 2013), the Researcher had only five days to move the Student through the ZPD by pushing her to confront the conflicts discussed in 5.1.1 through feedback.

The Czech participants' view that Anglophone native speakers are authorities on the PS genre and able to give feedback on all PS features (Table 5), aligns with Kachru's (1997) hierarchical distinction between Anglophone countries and those in the semiperiphery (Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 2014). Granted, research continues to elevate LETs contributions to the EFL classroom (Selvi, 2016), and NESTs, as insider-outsiders, have a unique

position to mitigate between Anglophone hegemony in ELT and understandings of the local context (Schreiber, 2016). However, the PS's semi-occluded status (Samraj & Monk, 2008), combined with the lack of materials and training for LETs that address the conflicts identified in Section 5.1.1, perpetuates a dependence on NESTs as assumed genre experts. Ultimately, this is at odds with Anglophone university policies to increase equal opportunity access (A. Thompson, 1997), as many schools in the semiperiphery do not have a NEST staff-member.

The contrast in genre expertise between the feedback from the Student's Czech brokers and the Researcher confirms the hypothesis that the unstructured PS feedback available to her was problematic. The Student's emotional response, which debilitated her ability to write and respond to feedback (Weiner, 2014) demonstrates the importance of available, trusted, genre-expert feedback from the start of the PS writing process for future Czech secondary school students.

5.2 Research Question 2

RQ2: What input and feedback are available to Czech secondary school students writing this genre from Czech advisors and university gatekeepers?

RQ2 was aimed at describing the input and feedback available to Czech secondary school students confronting the Problem from Czech advisors, as accessible local sources for students, and university gatekeepers, as genre evaluators in the target Anglophone discourse community. Trends and gaps that emerged in input and feedback from each source are discussed in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 respectively.

5.2.1 Czech Advisors

Access to genre expertise varies between schools in the Czech EFL context, as demonstrated by the different amounts of input and feedback sources available to students in the three Czech advisors' networks (Table 3). This inconsistency exists in both EFL and L1-English contexts (Swales, 1990); O'Sullivan, Robson, and Winters (2018) found that

UK students, primarily from state schools, also reported that teachers' lack of PS genre expertise and support was potentially detrimental for successful admission and forced them to seek guidance elsewhere. Although the Local Experts' genre expertise is promising, this can be attributed to their relational and geographical proximity in Czech City (Fontes & Sousa, 2015; Haselmair, Pirker, Kuhn, & Vogl, 2014), creating a "small world effect," (Carolan & Natriello, 2005, p. 28, i.e. in which nodes of a network can be easily linked), and to their access to NESTs and university gatekeepers, who enhanced their genre expertise. However, the Case exemplifies the trend in L1- and L2-PS-writing research of a "rhetorical void" (R.M. Brown, 2004) for students without genre-expert support.

The clustering and numbers of input sources across the English Teacher (ET) Network, Counselor Teacher (CT) Network, and Admissions Advisor (AA) Network reflect the different amounts of time each informant had to aggregate genre knowledge and develop genre expertise (ET: 2 months; CT: 5 years; AA: 18 years). The extent to which each had the time was also linked to their professional classification as a LET versus an Anglophone admissions guidance counselor. The University Gatekeepers' expectation that EFL teachers would similarly, independently acquire and offer PS genre expertise is not supported by research findings that Czech teachers feel unappreciated (Moree, 2013), are hesitant to access professional development (Beran, Maneš, & Ježek, 2007), and give up upon needing help to understand materials (Hrtoňová, Kohout, Rohlíková, & Zounek, 2015). By admitting her lack of genre expertise and deferring to the Researcher, the ET exhibited a lack of self-efficacy, which only exacerbated the Student's demotivation and feelings of emotional instability (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Ensuring that a Czech student's school and location do not determine their access to quality PS input and feedback requires a concerted effort to increase teachers' genre expertise to maintain pedagogical authority and limit students' emotional responses.

5.2.2 University Gatekeepers

The findings discussed in Section 5.1.1, the differences between the participant networks, and the confirmation that UK University does not provide PS feedback demonstrate three key assumptions of University Gatekeepers that were not met in the Case: (1) university-

published PS information is comprehensive, (2) local schools offer genre expertise-informed input to fill this gap, and (3) students have local access to genre-expertise-informed feedback. While the University Gatekeepers acknowledged that the PS features of language and content are challenging for EFL applicants, the other four problematic PS features (context, process, structure, and style) were not mentioned as topics incorporated into informational materials. This speaks to why the University Recruiter observed that local advisors are confused about PSs, even after they have accessed university-published resources. The assumption that students' schools, teachers, or, as a last resort, personal knowledge networks effectively provide input and feedback on all PS features to mediate their conflicts with students' backgrounds contradicts the disparity in genre-expertise between the Case and the Local Experts. In the Case, the limited university-developed online resources formed the basis of authority in a pseudo-online course that the Student had to self-curate; however, even structured online courses require teacher support to guide students to find and interpret "educationally productive Internet resources" (Feldman et al., 2000, p. 131; Wingate, 2012). Therefore, the University Gatekeepers' current strategy of disseminating incomplete PS information to students at schools without genre expertise was not effective in the Case, without the support of local Czech advisors to complement this input and provide feedback.

Returning to the hypotheses, the findings qualify that while information and resources on PS writing are available from Czech advisors and university gatekeepers, they were insufficient in the Case to address the PS features that conflicted with the Student's Czech background. The inconsistency in genre expertise across the Czech EFL context to fill the gaps left by the University Gatekeepers' input maintains the status of the PS as a "semi-occluded" genre (Samraj & Monk, 2008).

5.3 Research Question 3

RQ3: What are possible recommendations for pedagogy in Czech secondary schools based on the student experience, local advisor best practices, and gatekeeper criteria?

This chapter has thus far confirmed that Czech students' backgrounds of Czech culture, Czech writing, and Czech L1 and English L2-writing instruction, plus access to information, resources, and feedback that did not address this background as it related to the PS genre created the Problem in the Case. Given the pragmatist urgency to find solutions, RQ3 aimed to aggregate the Czech participants' practices, together with the University Gatekeepers' criteria, to offer preliminary pedagogical recommendations for input and feedback, and teacher training, as are discussed in Sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 respectively.

5.3.1 Input & Feedback

All Czech participants recommended more writing practice in the Czech curriculum. Yet L1-writing practice remains hindered by the Czech perception that writing is a natural talent rather than a skill that can and should be nurtured (Frydrychova Klimova, 2014b). Although the Student had experienced EFL task-based and genre-specific writing, she and the Admissions Advisor recommended more reflective writing (K. Williams, Woolliams, & Spiro, 2012) to better prepare for the PS content and language. Journal writing has been recommended to promote critical reflection for Asian students, who, similar to Czechs, are used to top-down educational cultures (Chittooran, 2015). In online settings, open-ended blogs have been recommended to promote students' creative and reflective L2-writing (L. Lee, 2010; L. Murray & Hourigan, 2008) and writing practice for a target audience (J.B. Williams & Jacobs, 2004). As shifting L1-teaching remains a challenge, reflective L2-writing practice could help Czech students with some challenging PS features.

The Czech advisors reported three purposes of using PS samples for input and feedback: (1) developing overall genre understanding; (2) providing examples of theoretical genre features; and (3) validating their feedback suggestions. Beyond their use for "modelling" in a genre-based pedagogy (K. Hyland, 2007, p. 158), samples provide a way to balance explicit and implicit genre awareness, and a gateway to a more critical approach (J.S. Hedgcock & Lee, 2017) to teaching the PS context. Students who receive formal modeling instruction also show greater understandings and abilities to replicate genre-structures

(Chen & Su, 2012; Mustafa, 1995). However, the Student's distrust of the English Teacher's (ET) scaffolded suggestions, and the Local Experts' observations that samples were ineffective unless students had already experimented with writing, indicate that complementary genre-expert instruction is needed based on the Vygotskian principle of mediation (Donato, 2000) to support students' genre knowledge and abilities to creatively manipulate genre features (Bhatia, 2014).

Beyond input about appropriate PS content, the Student also desired more information about the PS structure and writing process. Her recommendation of a tool (other than the UCAS tool) has been investigated from a genre-based approach based on cognitive theories of noticing that posit that encouraging learners to notice linguistic errors and features promotes acquisition over time (Schmidt, 2000). Due to the demands to publish research articles in international journals, (Flowerdew, 2000, 2001, 2007), genre-based digital tools targeting EFL writers have focused on assisting the achievement of rhetorical structures based on genre analyses and corpus-studies of common lexico-grammatical features (Birch-Béccas & Cooke, 2012; Mizuoto, Hamatani & Imao, 2017). While PS corpus (e.g. Almutairim, 2016) and genre analysis studies (e.g. Samraj & Monk, 2008; Wang & Flowerdew, 2016) exist at the postgraduate level, future research would need to first replicate these at the undergraduate level to build similar tools that would be relevant to the Case. However, this could still be problematic in that the PS does not have a set "magic formula," compared to the more fixed structures of other EAP genres.

In order to implement the recommended process writing approach to PS writing, the Student and ET would have needed more time to recursively draft and revise (Seow, 2010), and enrich their genre knowledge. The Counselor Teacher (CT) estimated it takes 2 to 3 years to develop genre expertise for input and feedback on PS writing; the ET had several weeks. The Admissions Advisor (AA) observed that the PS-writing learning curve takes an average of 3 months; the Student started 1 month before. In the Case, where the Researcher asked the Student to make leaps in this process in a pressured amount of time, a combination of more time and a more positive emotional state may have increased her receptiveness to this feedback (Y. Hu, Wang, Pang, Xu, & Guo, 2015; Weiner, 2014) and

ability to overcome the conflicts between her Czech background and the PS features without an inhibiting emotional response.

5.3.2 Teacher Training

The Student, ET, and AA each wished for more training to develop Czech secondary school teachers' expertise and confidence in teaching the PS genre, or on writing in general. Cheung (2011) criticized the lack of research on teacher identity, attitude, and efficacy in writing teacher education. However, in the wider literature, teacher efficacy has been shown to have positive outcomes on student achievement and motivation (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), and increase teachers' openness to new pedagogies (Guskey, 1988). Attention to EFL teacher training for PS writing therefore has promising benefits for both reacting to and preventing the Problem and the Student's crippling emotional response in future cases.

As the first point of contact for the Student and an involved practitioner with the lowest level of current knowledge according to the knowledge hierarchy (Figure 1), the ET pragmatically offered concrete suggestions for the sources of this training (Graves, 1996; Pring, 2007). Her first idea was to have a student and teacher book series, which does not currently exist in the Czech curriculum, and to use these materials to teach an elective class, similar to the Private School's practitioner-developed guidebooks and university preparation program (Olshtain, 1989). The ET's suggestion to have hypothetical PS tasks in the student's book is supported by Byrnes and Manchón's (2014) advocacy for task-based language teaching in L2 writing. However, compared to the traditional, SFL genre-based approach in the Czech EFL classroom (Breveníkova, 2013), a PS book that adopts an English for academic purposes (EAP) genre-based approach (K. Hyland, 2002) would satisfy the Student's desire for a more contextualized understanding of the PS genre. These suggestions create the foundation of a preliminary, informal needs analysis of Czech EFL secondary school student and teachers for PS teaching and learning (West, 1994).

The ET proposed that it would be even more effective to have a seminar with Anglophone teachers about the genre, with the opportunity to write and receive feedback on a PS (Kohnen, 2013). Seminars and courses have been shown to shape EFL teachers' identities as writing teachers and understandings of genre and process writing (I. Lee, 2010), to mediate clashes between these Western pedagogies and pre-existing L2-writing practices (L. J. Zhang, 2016), and to lower anxiety and boost confidence (Pelton, 2014). The ET's comment that the seminar would be led by an Anglophone teacher demonstrates the value of genre knowledge transmission from experts to novice teachers (Bakhtin, 1986) through situated cognitive development (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993), but still supports the idealization and assumption that NESTs are authorities on this Anglophone genre (Copland et al., 2016). The AA's observation that his colleagues will need to gain active experience working with students, beyond passively attending workshops and trainings, also cautions against seminars as an easy solution prepare teachers for the Problem.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The Czech Republic, a small country of approximately 10.5 million (Czech Statistical Office, 2018) comprises only a small proportion of the total US (<0.01%; Institute of International Education, 2017b) and UK international student populations (<0.01%; Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018b). Yet, the Researcher's extensive experience working with Czech secondary school students confronting the Problem and identification of the paradoxical and emotionally extreme situation of this Case, warranted attention. In adopting pragmatism as an epistemological framework, this study provides initial evidence that the causes of the Problem stem from conflicts between the Czech EFL context and features of the PS genre, as constructed by the Anglophone-academic discourse community. In adopting sociocultural theory and academic literacies as theoretical approaches, the Case demonstrated a student's emotional experience when left without genre-expert information, resources, or feedback to overcome these conflicts, since her English teacher lacked a sufficient network or time. To prevent reliance on NESTs in the future, the pragmatic directive to find solutions yielded pedagogical recommendations for input, feedback, and teacher training, sourced from the Student's and Czech advisors' perspectives as practitioner experts.

6.1 Limitations

Although the Case has been analyzed instrumentally based on the inclusion of Czech advisors and university gatekeepers, case study research limits any generalizability to all secondary school students or teachers in other EFL contexts, or even in the Czech Republic. Rather, this study, constrained in length (Wolcott, 2009), acts as a gateway to future research to understand the Problem and develop potential solutions through a methodology that could be replicated to aggregate more practitioner voices.

A further limitation was the Researcher's participatory involvement in this particular Case and insider knowledge of PS-writing and EFL-writing education in the Czech Republic. While this provided the inspiration for the study and many of the opportunities to collect data, the Researcher's status as a NEST, American, and current student at an Anglophone

university lends support to positioning as an outsider to the local Czech context. Yet, by adopting positioning as an “inbetweenner” the Researcher has aimed to simultaneously elevate practitioner voices and situate their experiences and recommendations within the larger theoretical context to explore the Problem and uncover potential solutions.

6.2 Suggestions for Further Research

This study hopes to inspire further research and pedagogical action to combat the Problem for future Czech secondary school students. The study design, theoretical scope, and focus on undergraduate PSs written in a Czech EFL context, were unique in PS research, yet this study only scratches the surface of the Problem and possible solutions in other linguistic and educational contexts. At the foundation, this study suffered from a lack of scholarly consensus about PSs as a genre and undergraduate PSs in general. Although this study identified many sources of input and feedback that already exist, the missing link of a formal PS pedagogy and EFL teacher training creates an unnecessary burden for individual students, already at a low position in the knowledge hierarchy, to develop networks from scratch. To maintain a pragmatic goal, further research bridging the fields of EAP and ELT must work to prepare Czech EFL teachers to support future secondary school students in their L2-English goals.

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Appendix A: Student Personal Statement Draft One (D1)

I was an exchange student at [REDACTED] in 2013/2014. For the year of my study I chose subjects, like Economics, Psychology and Principles of Business. Studying these subjects, mainly Principles of Business, I have created a passion for understanding how businesses are run: how to manage a business and its employees to create the best functioning timepiece. During my studies I have learnt that hard work is essential to successful business, which only confirmed my observations as I have watched my father to run a business. I was fascinated by the amount of work that was put into its expandability and innovations. I would be delighted to attend a university in the UK to study the major I am so strongly enthusiastic about, the Business Management. It would be a huge opportunity for me to get higher education on an international level.

In 2008 I passed an entrance exam to [REDACTED] where I am currently studying. This school has taught me how to study effectively and given me the best general knowledge. In 2013 I applied to [REDACTED] and successfully as an exchange student joined the class of 2015, grade 11. While studying Economics I have learnt that it plays the dynamical role in today's world. I have been passionate about Principles of Business because I enjoyed learning strategical parts about business plans, including the analytical sphere of business itself. My greatest achievement was grade A on my final exam in a group project, which should have simulated a whole process of starting a business. This project taught me not only cooperation in a team and problem-solving but also to give presentations in front of a large audience.

In 2014 I came back and continued my education at [REDACTED] in the Czech Republic and I have been studying for my Maturita Exam, up-coming in May 2017. For my Maturita exam I have chosen Czech language, English, History and Geography. I believe History is helpful in enlightening us from past decisions and thanks to Geography I can recognize different economic situations in other countries.

I have also taken up Economics and Marketing as my extra-curriculum subjects for two years, expanding my knowledge how to sell a product to customers or deal with business finances. Apart from my school activities I am keen on origami, which teaches me precision, patience and ability to focus on the smallest details. I believe these skills are highly transferable into business management. For more than 9 years I was a part of school choirs in the Czech Republic as well as in [REDACTED]. Also, I am proud to be the class representative which helped me to developed useful leadership and organizational skills.

My working experience as a sales assistant in [REDACTED] really reinforced my desire to study Business Management. I have noticed the essentials of communicating with customers or supplying the shop with its goods. The ten months work in [REDACTED] gave me riveting insight into its presentation of high quality products and interactions with others in a work team. Due to my second job for [REDACTED] as a baby-sitter and tutor for young children I improved my time management to be able to have two jobs at the same time. Close relationship with children of various ages strengthened up my independent and creative thinking and formed a sense for being fully responsible for my decisions.

I am eager to further my education in business based degree, especially in management which I would like to pursue. I understand the vital necessities for my future studies such as hard work, independent thinking and communicative skills which I demonstrate in various aspects of my everyday life, as I have mentioned earlier, in order to achieve my dream career as a successful business manager.

Appendix B: Student Personal Statement Draft Two (D2)

The moment when I heard the sentence -- I accept your offer, I knew it was my greatest achievement to date. Hearing those words meant that thanks to our hard work we turned an idea into business plan for potential product which would be able to hit the market and go far. This group project was our final exam in Principles of Business and it was based on the TV show Dragons' Den. The goal was clear, in theory to create a profitable company and present it to our own dragons in order to get the deal and the best mark. This experience is just one of many reasons that has sparked my determination to study a course I am so strongly enthusiastic about, Business Management.

This project was successful end of my year of studying at [REDACTED], where I was attending as an exchange student. It not only taught me how to cooperate on a team and to solve a problem but also to give presentations in front of a large audience. While studying Economics I learnt that it plays a dynamical role in today's world. When I continued my education at [REDACTED] I chose Economics and Marketing as my extra-curriculum subjects, expanding my knowledge on how to sell a product to customers or how to deal with business finances. Now I am preparing myself for Maturita Exam, upcoming in May, 2017 and I have chosen Czech language, English, History and Geography. This process has taught me how to study effectively and given me the best general knowledge on various aspects in our world throughout past and present and has prepared me to study business management in the United Kingdom.

My working experience as a sales assistant in [REDACTED] and in [REDACTED] really reinforced my desire to study Business Management. I finally had the opportunity to be part of business environment in real life. I have learnt the essentials of communicating with customers, supplying the shop with goods and interacting with others in a work team. The practical knowledge I gained during my work within international companies will allow me to be open-minded and creative in contribution on various situations throughout my further studies in Business Management.

Also, I am proud to be the class representative which strengthens my communicative and leadership skills. My biggest responsibility was to organize an event important for so many teenagers - the prom. Thanks to this opportunity I gained the abilities to know how to manage our finances, communicate within my classmates and school administration and mainly, how to make creative ideas work.

As an exchange student I tend to approach to ordinary things with international point of view. The experience of being an exchange student for me was life changing because I learnt how to be completely independent and what means to work hard in order to succeed. In addition as a result of my exchange I passed English Cambridge certificate FCE, obtaining Grade A, level C1. I would be delighted to study in the United Kingdom because it would be an opportunity for me to once again get higher education on international level.

I am eager to further my education in business based degree, especially in management which I would like to pursue. I understand the vital necessities for my future studies such as hard work and independent thinking. I hope to run a prosperous business and be able to work in international sphere of the world one day. Studying in the United Kingdom would be surely the next biggest step forward.

Appendix C: Case Timeline

- December 9, 2016: S messages R about writing SoP [PS]
- December 10, 2016: S notifies R is contacting schools about requirements
- December 18, 2016: S follows up that R is still willing to help with SoP [PS]
- December 26, 2016: S contacts R to wish Merry Christmas
- January 1, 2017: S contacts R about stress
- January 2, 2017: S contacts R about introduction and not knowing how to start with quote
- January 8/9, 2017: S contacts R that has finished personal statement and requesting feedback; sends **Draft 1** via email
- January 10, 2017: R sends **Draft 1 Feedback** via email, S follows up and R suggests to Skype
- January 11, 2017: S + R Skype (28 minutes 24 seconds), S+R Facebook message to revise essay
 - **MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT: January 11, 2017, 9:33PM to January 12, 2017, 1:05AM**
- January 12, 2017: R messages S to check-in about progress and S+R Facebook message to revise essay
 - **FOCUS TEXT: January 12, 2017, 8:35PM to 8:43PM**
 - S sends **Draft 2**
- January 13, 2017: R sends Draft 2 Feedback, S submits draft

Appendix D: Student Interview Schedule

1. Introduction + personal and educational background history up until this point. How long and in what contexts had you been studying English?
2. <SHOW TIMELINE (Appendix C)>
3. <SHOW FOCUS TEXT (Appendix E)>

January 12, 2017 (20:35-20:43 CET)

S: Researcher I can't write any another thing

S: I hate it

S: it shouldn't be this hard

4. What types of writing had you done previously in secondary school (for assessment)? In Czech? In English?
5. What does “good writing” look like in Czech vs. in English? Any specific criteria?

R: ok then take a break or go to sleep and work on it tomorrow

S: what I wrote is my maximum I know it

6. <SHOW D1 (Appendix A)> You sent me Draft 1 on January 9 and then we worked together on Draft 2 until January 13. Have a look through Draft 1 to remind yourself of what you wrote – let me know when you’ve had enough time.
7. Why did you believe that Draft 1 was your “maximum”?

S: I can't

S: I can't deal with it another day

R: well then you have to push through it even though it sucks right now

R: you're so close it's not worth the regret of not finishing it

S: I spent almost a month on it and what I sent you was the greatest work of my life

8. On December 9 you first asked me for help and then sent me Draft 1 on January 9. What happened between here?

9. Did you look for any help with writing this between Dec and Jan? If so, from what source(s)? [If it was a person: Who did you ask for help? Did they help you? How (give specific examples where possible)?] If it wasn't a person – why and how did you access that source? Was it helpful? If so, how did it help? (please give specific examples if you can)? Were there any other sources? Etc.

10. Why did you decide to ask me for help? What type of help did you expect from me?

R: and it is great

R: you just have to rearrange it and add to it

R: that's all we've been doing

S: no we are writing a whole different piece

11. <SHOW D1 FEEDBACK (Appendix F)> Here are the comments that I sent – Have a read through and then let me know when you're ready to continue. and then we Skyped for about 30 minutes. How did you feel receiving these comments on Draft 1?

12. Was it difficult for you to respond to or understand my comments on your writing? If so, why/how?

13. How did you go about responding to my comments? Why did you follow that particular approach?

R: it's ok this feels hard, it's a type of writing you've never done before

S: we changed every single paragraph and I'm writing the informations in just different way

14. <SHOW D2 (Appendix B)> Now have a look at Draft 2 and compare it with the first draft. Let me know when you've had enough time. In what ways are the drafts different?

15. Did writing the PS (either writing or getting comments) feel different from how you had written in English or Czech before? In what way(s)?

R: i'm sorry it feels overwhelming and honestly you would be in great shape to take the parts we wrote and just fill in the gaps with what you've already written

R: you just have to do some copying and pasting to get there

R: I'm sorry if it feels like i'm making it harder for you but i'm asking you these questions to get you to think like their application recommends. if it feels overwhelming for me to be sending you the messages with ?s use this tool on their website:

<https://www.ucasdigital.com/widgets/personalstatement/index.html#/main>

UCAS personal statment web app

[ucasdigital.com](https://www.ucasdigital.com)

S: no I was writing the original draft from this

16. When you first found the PS prompt on UCAS, what did you do? Why? How did that work out/go for you? Did you do anything else? Why? Was that helpful? In what way?
17. Where did you go for information? Why? Was it helpful? In what way/why not? Did you go anywhere else? Why? Was it helpful? Why/not?

S: the messeges are better

18. <SHOW MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT> Here is a copy of our Facebook messages back and forth between January 11 and January 13. Let me know when you have had a look. Why were the messages helpful for you?
19. Was there a difference in receiving help in English versus in Czech?
20. I gave you feedback on this document via Skype, via Track Changes and via Facebook messenger. Was any one or combination of these modes more helpful to you than the others? (Mode, timing, frequency)
 - a. If not, were any of them helpful?
 - b. If so, which was most helpful, and why? Which was least helpful and why?
21. How would you compare the feedback that I gave to you with the feedback that your teacher gave to you on this PS?

S: I just can't write anymore

S: I don't know the words,how to put them into a sentence

22. What did you mean by this comment? Did you feel this way about all of your writing in English at the time? If not, which types did you feel like this about? Why/how? Just the PS?

23. Was there a particular type of language knowledge that was helpful to you when writing this PS? / Do you think some kinds of knowledge that you had were more helpful in writing this than other types of knowledge? Why/how? Can you give me any specific examples?—Examples: words, phrases, grammar, structures, style?

S: this is just it this is my maximum I can do

24. Looking back, is there anything you wish you would have done differently before, during or after writing? Or known before you started writing your PS?

25. Are there any resources you wish you had to help you?

26. Are there any resources you wish your teachers had to help you?

27. What type of writing do you do now as a student at a UK university?

28. What type of feedback do you get from your professors?

29. Did writing your PS at all prepare you for Anglophone university level writing?

Appendix E: Focus Text

Student (S): Researcher I can't write any another thing

S: I hate it

S: it shouldn't be this hard

Researcher (R): ok then take a break or go to sleep and work on it tomorrow

S: what I wrote is my maximum I know it

S: I can't

S: I can't deal with it another day

R: well then you have to push through it even though it sucks right now

R: you're so close it's not worth the regret of not finishing it

S: I spent almost a month on it and what I sent you was the greatest work of my life

R: and it is great

R: you just have to rearrange it and add to it

R: that's all we've been doing

S: no we are writing a whole different piece

R: it's ok this feels hard, it's a type of writing you've never done before

S: we changed every single paragraph and I'm writing the informations in just different way

R: i'm sorry it feels overwhelming and honestly you would be in great shape to take the parts we wrote and just fill in the gaps with what you've already written

R: you just have to do some copying and pasting to get there

R: I'm sorry if it feels like i'm making it harder for you but i'm asking you these questions to get you to think like their application recommends. if it feels overwhelming for me to

be sending you the messages with ?s use this tool on their website:

<https://www.ucasdigital.com/widgets/personalstatement/index.html#/main>

[UCAS personal statment web app](#)

[ucasdigital.com](https://www.ucasdigital.com)

S: no I was writing the original draft from this

S: the messeges are better

S: I just can't write anymore

S: I don't know the words,how to put them into a sentence

S: this is just it this is my maximum I can do

Appendix F: Draft One (D1) Researcher Feedback

I was an exchange student at [REDACTED] in 2013/2014. For the year of my study I chose subjects, like Economics, Psychology and Principles of Business. Studying these subjects, mainly Principles of Business, I have created a passion for understanding how businesses are run: how to manage a business and its employees to create the best functioning timepiece. During my studies I have learnt that hard work is essential to successful business, which only confirmed my observations as I have watched my father to run a business. I was fascinated by the amount of work that was put into its expandability and innovations. I would be delighted to attend a university in the United Kingdom to study the major I am so strongly enthusiastic about, Business Management. It would be a huge opportunity for me to get higher education on an international level.

In 2008, I passed an entrance exam to attend the [REDACTED] where I am currently studying. This school has taught me how to study effectively and given me the best general knowledge. In 2013, I applied to [REDACTED] and successfully joined the class of 2015, as an exchange student in Grade 11. While studying Economics, I have learnt that it plays a dynamic role in today's world. I am passionate about Principles of Business because I enjoyed learning strategic parts about business plans, including the analytical sphere of business itself. My greatest achievement was grade A on my final exam in a group project, which should have simulated a whole process of starting a business. This project not only taught me how to cooperate on a team and problem-solve, but also to give presentations in front of a large audience.

In 2014, I came back and continued my education at [REDACTED] in the Czech Republic and I have been studying for my Maturita Exam, upcoming in May 2017. For my Maturita exam I have chosen Czech language, English, History and Geography. I believe History is helpful in enlightening us from past decisions and thanks to Geography, I can recognize different economic situations in other countries.

Commented [REDACTED]: This should go with [REDACTED] part in second paragraph.

Commented [REDACTED]: What type of business does your father run? Have you been involved at all or had any experiences working with him?

Commented [REDACTED]: The first time you say a noun that has an acronym you should write it out. Then moving forward you can use the acronym ☺

Deleted: the

Commented [REDACTED]: Why? How would this help you in the future?

Commented [REDACTED]: I'm never sure how to translate gymnaziūm in English, but I think the term college preparatory school better explains the difference of gymnaziūm than grammar school

Deleted:

Deleted: as an exchange student

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Commented [REDACTED]: What were the challenges and surprises of this project? Can you think of a specific moment or memory from this project that had a big impact on you?

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Deleted: cooperation

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Deleted: -

Commented [REDACTED]: How will focusing on these subjects help with your studies in Business Management?

I have also taken up Economics and Marketing as my extra-curricular subjects for two years, expanding my knowledge how to sell a product to customers or deal with business finances. Apart from my school activities I am keen on origami, which teaches me precision, patience and the ability to focus on the smallest details. I believe these skills are highly transferable into business management. For more than 9 years I was a part of school choirs in the Czech Republic as well as in [REDACTED]. Also, I am proud to be the class representative, which helped me to develop useful leadership and organizational skills.

Deleted: um

Commented [REDACTED] This is a great thing to expand upon as it shows your leadership capabilities. What have you been responsible for as class representative? What have been some challenges and how have you overcome them?

My working experience as a sales assistant in [REDACTED] really reinforced my desire to study Business Management. I have noticed the essentials of communicating with customers or supplying the shop with its goods. The ten months work in [REDACTED] gave me riveting insight into its presentation of high quality products and interactions with others in a work team. Due to my second job for [REDACTED] as a baby-sitter and tutor for young children I improved my time management to be able to have two jobs at the same time. Developing close relationships with children of various ages has strengthened my independent and creative thinking and formed a sense of being fully responsible for my decisions.

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I am eager to further my education in business-based degree, especially in management, which I would like to pursue. I understand the vital necessities for my future studies, such as hard work, independent thinking and communicative skills, which I demonstrate in various aspects of my everyday life, as I have mentioned earlier, in order to achieve my dream career as a successful business manager.

Deleted:

Commented [REDACTED] In your conclusion, it's less important how you have applied them in the past and more important how will you apply these when at university

Appendix G: Message Transcript

Student (S): Researcher I don't think I can write it any better...

Researcher (R): You can! Have you made any changes since we talked

S: I tried but everything sounds awful

R: Also I love your project docs look great

S: thank you

S: I just can't finish the introduction

R: What do you have so far to start?

S: nothing... I deleted the part about going to America and I tried several times to start about the project or anything like that

S: but it sounds forced and unnatural

S: so I deleted it because there was nothing to actually work with

S: I feel so forced... it's nothing like me

R: Haha I know it feels unnatural but again it's ok to show your personality and how you think

S: but don't get me wrong not forced from you but the concept of the statement itself

R: Haha I know it's different

S: yeah...

S: I don't know how to tight it together because for me it's just listing these things which I think could be nice about me

R: Ok try writing the introduction about the project or even though it feels weird and then send it to me and we can work from there

R: It's not going to be perfect but have to start somewhere 😊

S: Okay..

S: so just what I feel I would write about it yeah?

S: Okay I'm going to write something

S: I'll try again

R: Yes just write and then we'll make changes

R: If necessary 😊

R: thank you

S: Researcher?

S: The moment when I heard the words -- Yes I accept your offer, five times, I knew that was my greatest achievement to date. I recieved mark A on my final exam from Principles of Business as a result of hard work my partner and me put into this project. With our business plan in our heads we were determined to get the deal.

S: Can we work with this or should I write absolutelly differently?

R: Such a great start!!!

R: 😊

S: are you serious?

R: haha yes

S: okay thank you... but I have a question I don't think UK people know Shark Tank, should I explain it or how should I continue?

R: I think the second sentence needs to just be clarified that it was a Shark tank-like project for your Principles of Business class.

S: yeah that what I think! but that's my question right there

R: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragons%27_Den_\(UK_TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragons%27_Den_(UK_TV_series))

S: should I explain it then? 😊

S: oh wow okay

R: 😊

S: thank you

R: your welcome let me know if you want me to look at it again

S: just a quick question... I recieved mark A on my final exam from Principles of Business as a result of hard work my partner and I put into this project which simulated..... the concept of offering our business plan as in TV show Dragons' Den.

S: does it sound too dumb?

R: I would take out the A on your final exam and focus on receiving all of he approvals from the judges

S: okay

S: I'm sorry Researcher I just can't do this. I have no idea how to write it.

R: don't get discouraged what you have already is great

R: Instead of "I received mark A," explain what hearing the phrase "Yes I accept your offer" meant for your business plan in this Dragon's Den simulation

S: nothing just the grade

S: that's it you know for me it the biggest success was the grade

R: I mean in that they were proving that you had worked hard, created a valid product, succeeded in pitching your idea etc. and as a result you got an A, but you gained all these other things in between 😊

S: I'll try

S: The moment when I heard the words -- Yes I accept your offer, five times, I knew that was my greatest achievement to date. With our business plan in our heads we were determined to get the deal and we did. To hear this meant that we not only received the best mark on our final exam but also that thanks to our hard work we created a valid product which would be able to hit the market and had the potential to go far.

S: something like this?

R: i have to go bring dinner to my sister at her theatre practice but i'll read it as soon as I get back home!

S: okay no problem 😊

S: I'll work on it more then

S: The moment when I heard the words -- Yes I accept your offer, five times, I knew that was my greatest achievement to date. To hear this meant that thanks to our hard work we turned an idea into a business plan with potential for a valid product which would be able to hit the market and go far. This group project was our final exam in Principles of Business and it was based on TV show Dragons' Den, so the goal was clear. In theory to create a profitable company and present it to our own dragons in order to get the deal.

R: So much better!!

S: thank you

R: Now just close the paragraph with a sentence that leads into how this experience in combination with all the great things you will talk about in the next paragraphs inspired you to apply to university in the U.K. To study business

R: Then introduction done minus some little grammar stuff 😊

S: yeah I know about the mistakes but I am no sure about them and to be honest I'm getting tired so it's hard to focus on the grammar, but I will fix it

S: not*

S: The moment when I heard the words -- Yes I accept your offer, , I knew that was my greatest achievement to date. To heard it meant that thanks to our hard work we turned an idea into business plan with potential for a valid product which would be able to hit the market and go far. This group project was our final exam in Principles of Business and it was based on the TV show Dragons' Den. The goal was clear, in theory to create a profitable company and present it to our own dragons in order to get the deal and points. This experience was one of many other impulses why I would be delighted to attend a university in the United Kingdom to study the major, I am so strongly enthusiastic about, Business Management.

S: is it bad?

R: It's great!!!

R: Impulses isn't the right word there let me think

S: reasons maybe?

R: Yea reasons

R: Or you could rephrase it to say "this is just one of many experiences that has motivated me to study..."

S: The moment when I heard the words -- Yes I accept your offer, I knew it was my greatest achievement to date. To heard it meant that thanks to our hard work we turned an idea into business plan with potential for a valid product which would be able to hit the market and go far. This group project was our final exam in Principles of Business and it was based on the TV show Dragons' Den. The goal was clear, in theory to create a profitable company and present it to our own dragons in order to get the deal and points. This is just one of many experiences that has motivated me to study a major I am so strongly enthusiastic about, Business Management.

S: like this?

R: Beautiful!

S: thank you

S: Mean while I tried to do something about my work experiences

S: My working experience as a sales assistant in [REDACTED] and in [REDACTED] really reinforced my desire to study Business Management. I finally had the opportunity to experience it in real life. I have realized the essentials of communicating with customers, supplying the shop with goods and interacting with others in a work team.

S: I wrote this, may I ask what do you think about it?

R: So great! Now add a last sentence how you will apply this experience to your studies, maybe something how this business experience in the Czech Republic will give you a unique perspective to contribute

S: My working experience as a sales assistant in [REDACTED] and in [REDACTED] really reinforced my desire to study Business Management. I finally had the opportunity to be part of business environment in real life. I have realized the essentials of communicating with customers, supplying the shop with

goods and interacting with others in a work team. I believe that the practical knowledge I gained during my work will be highly transferable to my further studies in Business Management.

S: like that or should I add to the last sentence something more?

S: something *

R: Take out I believe (in general in your writing you never need these things like I believe, I think etc because it's implied because you're writing it 😊)

S: oh okay I didn't know that

S: deleted

R: I think you could add in something about working with international businesses in the Czech Republic I know it doesn't feel special but it will be something that sets you apart from your classmates

S: I am not sure if I can say this was working with international businesses... do you think so?

R: Well both of them are international brands

S: yes that's true

R: So you were following the policies of an international company within a Czech context

S: that's true

R: Pretty interesting

S: I've never thought about it like that

S: for me it was completely normal

R: Haha exactly

S: okay I'll try to add it, thank you Researcher 😊

R: But when you're in a class with all UK people who had the same experience yours will be something not normal 😊

S: haha and I even skipped in my work experience list that I was working in [REDACTED] two years ago 😊

S: that was international I was at the meeting with owners of [REDACTED] in the Central Europe

R: Haha well i would say keep 2 but pick whichever 2 had the biggest impact

R: Woah that's so cool

S: my boss needed my help to translate so he brought me with him 😊

R: Wow haha

S: I think I have a photo of me and the American boss in my phone but I would have to look 😊

S: The practical knowledge I gained during my work within international companies will be highly transferable to my further studies in Business Management.

S: can it be like this?

R: Sounds good!

S: or what about this?

S: My working experience as a sales assistant in [REDACTED] and in [REDACTED] really reinforced my desire to study Business Management. I finally had the opportunity to be part of business environment in real life. I have realized the essentials of communicating with customers, supplying the shop with goods and interacting with others in a work team. The practical knowledge I gained during my work within international companies might be highly transferable to my further studies in Business Management, because it provides me with different perspectives to various situations.

R: I like the one before

S: okay

R: Also don't say might! Sound confident 😊

S: okay 😊

S: so you don't think I need to provide a reason why I think it will be usefull in my further studies?

R: You definitely can add something there too

R: The practical knowledge I gained during my work within international companies will allow me to...during my further studies in Business Management.

R: Fill in the "... " part

S: got it

R: Also you're awake so late!!

S: I know... I will finish this one and I will probably go to sleep and finish it tomorrow

R: Smart --you're in such a great track and you'll be able to look at it with fresh eyes tomorrow 😊

S: I hope it iwll be better tomorrow, I had really crisis today, thank you for helping me I really appreciate it Researcher

S: will *

R: Of course! I'm glad I could help and you're doing a great job

S: thank you but I wouldn't without you

S: My working experience as a sales assistant in [REDACTED] and in [REDACTED] really reinforced my desire to study Business Management. I finally had the opportunity to be part of business environment in real life. I have realized the essentials of communicating with customers, supplying the shop with goods and interacting with others in a work team. The practical knowledge I gained during my work within international companies will allow me to be open-minded and creative in contribution on various situations throughout my further studies in Business Management.

S: that's my job paragraph

S: what do you think?

R: Instead of realized I would say learned or gained the skills of

R: Otherwise it looks great and we can do all the grammar little things at the end

S: okay I will find the mistakes in the morning I think, at least some of them

S: one last thing and then I will go to sleep and let you live your life

S: how should I continue in the second paragraph after the introduction?

S: so I know what to write tomorrow... I just don't know how to connected or what exactly say in that paragraph

R: I think sleep on it and it will be clearer in the morning how it comes out

R: But I think the focus would be your studies at [REDACTED]

S: okay you are right

S: I'm exhausted right now

S: my english has to be terrible

S: sorry about that I'm going to sleep, thanks a lot again and I will work on the rest tomorrow

R: It's not but give your brain a break

R: Dobrou noc!

S: dobrou !

Appendix H: Czech Advisor Interview Schedule

1. Introduction Information
 - a. Self Introduction (name, where did you graduate/ study, how long have you been teaching English/advising on the Anglophone admissions process etc)
 - b. What is your current position?
 - i. How old are the students you work with?
 - ii. How long have you held it?
 - iii. What are any past positions that inform your experience assisting students with writing PSs for Anglophone admissions?
 - c. In your education, did you ever write essays in English? In Czech?
 - d. Have you ever personally written a PS in English to go abroad?
 - e. Approximately how many students have you worked with on writing a PS for Anglophone admissions?
2. Czech Writing Curriculum
 - a. How much writing instruction do students receive in Czech and English in your school? Process? Product?
 - b. For Maturita, what types of writing do students do? How long are these works?
 - c. How does good writing in English look like? Is this the same for writing in Czech?
 - d. What are the most common problems in students' writing in English?
 - e. What kinds of feedback or corrections do you give to students' writing? Ex. vocab, grammar, structure, style
3. Statement of purpose advising and feedback experience
 - a. Do you do any lessons about writing PSs with students?
 - b. What does a good quality PS look like? What features does it have?
 - c. What do you feel is your role in helping students with writing PSs to go abroad?
 - i. What do students expect?
 - ii. How do you feel you can help?
 - iii. Do you know what the evaluators are looking for?
 - d. Once a student has completed their PS draft and asks you for help, what do you do? What kinds of comments do you give?
 - e. What kinds of problems come up for students are writing PSs?
 - f. Have any issues come up when you give students comments and they try to use your responses in their writings?
4. Available resources
 - a. Where have you primarily gone for information on PSs in order to advise students on the writing process? Any trainings, in-person, online etc.?
 - b. What information do you provide to students to assist them in the writing process beyond directly working with you?
 - c. What information/system do you wish you had to better assist students?

Appendix I: English Teacher Text-Based Interview

Interview Schedule

On January 12, you wrote me this message:

Teacher (T): Hi, Researcher

T: The Student is desperate

- Tell me about what happened that day.
- Why did you feel the need to write me about how she was doing?

Researcher (R): Hi Teacher I just woke up

T: oh, sorry

R: I talked with her a lot yesterday

R: I think she's on a good track

T: but she doesn't like the new version, she doesn't feel like it says something about her... I am afraid she will not submit it

- What about the new version felt so different?
- How did you try to help her?
- Why were you afraid she would not submit the application?

R: Ok I'll talk to her again today

T: thank you

Interview Material (Presented to English Teacher)

On January 12, you wrote me this message:

Teacher (T): Hi, Researcher

T: The Student is desperate

Researcher (R): Hi Teacher I just woke up

T: oh, sorry

R: I talked with her a lot yesterday

R: I think she's on a good track

T: but she doesn't like the new version, she doesn't feel like it says something about her... I am afraid she will not submit it

R: Ok I'll talk to her again today

T: thank you

Appendix J: University Gatekeeper Interview Schedule

1. Introduction Information
 - a. Self-Introduction (name, where did you study/graduate, how long have you been evaluating students during the admissions process etc.)
 - b. How long have you held your current position? What are any past positions that inform your experience assisting students with writing PSs for Anglophone admissions?
2. PS Writing and Gatekeeping
 - a. How are PSs evaluated by admissions tutors?
 - b. What are the characteristics of a good PS for undergraduate admissions at the University?
 - c. Are there any differences that you have seen between international students' and UK students' PSs?
 - d. Are there any particular challenges that you think international students face when applying to the University?
 - e. Are admissions tutors trained in evaluating international students' credentials?
3. Advisor Roles
 - a. Who do you feel is responsible for assisting international students with writing PSs or navigating the admissions process?
 - b. How should international students go about getting feedback on application materials?
4. Resources
 - a. What information or resources do you provide to students or local advisors to assist them with writing PSs? The admissions process in general?
 - b. How is this information disseminated or delivered?
 - c. Have you encountered any problems in communicating admissions expectations to international students or local advisors?
 - d. Where could a student or local advisor go for the best information on writing a PS?

Appendix K: Piloting Activities

The Student Interview Schedule

The Student Interview Schedule and stimulated recall materials of two PS drafts and the first draft with Researcher feedback were piloted with another student from the Gymnázium over Skype, due to time and resource constraints. The Student and pilot student shared similar profiles in terms of educational background, excluding the Student's US secondary school experience. While all stimuli were used as prompts, it was not possible to pilot the text-based nature of the Student Interview Schedule, as the Researcher and pilot student did not communicate about her PS via Facebook Messenger. The only note that was made post-piloting was to clarify about the difference between formative and assessed writing assignments in the Student's educational background.

The Czech Advisor Interview Schedule

The Czech Advisor Interview Schedule was piloted with two LETs from the Gymnázium at a café in Oxford, England. One previously taught the Student at the Gymnázium. Several changes were made to specify questions about the Czech curriculum and rearrange the order to promote a more natural flow. In addition, some word choices were changed to adopt common phrases used by the pilot-LETs to discuss the same topics. Also, specific mention of the Maturita exam was added to spark reflection this assessment shapes teaching and learning of L1 and L2-writing.

The University Gatekeeper Interview Schedule

The University Gatekeeper Interview Schedule was discussed with an academic supervisor who has been an admissions evaluator. No changes were made.

APPENDIX L: Student Information Sheet

Where to turn?: A case study of Czech student and local advisor experiences of writing statements of purpose for undergraduate Anglophone admissions

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. *What is the purpose of this research?*

This study will investigate the landscape of writing instruction, feedback, and challenges for Czech secondary school students writing statements of purpose (SoPs) in English for Anglophone undergraduate admissions and make recommendations for Czech teachers to assist EFL students in this endeavour. As a result, this study aims to increase Czech secondary school students' access to international education opportunities in Anglophone countries.

2. *Why have I been invited to take part?*

You have been invited to participate because of your experience with Anglophone undergraduate admissions statements of purpose written by Czech secondary school students.

The inclusion criteria for the study include the undergraduate admissions in Anglophone countries as experienced by Czech secondary school students.

3. *Do I have to take part?*

No. You can ask questions about the study before deciding whether or not to participate. If you do agree to participate, you may withdraw yourself and your data from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without penalty, by advising the researchers of this decision. If you choose to withdraw, all data will be securely discarded and omitted from the final research study. Please inform the Principal Investigator of your decision within 24 hours after the end of the interview.

Once the interview data has been transcribed, you will have the opportunity to review the interview transcript. At that time, you may highlight any sections that you wish to be omitted from the analysis.

4. *What will happen to me if I take part in the research?*

If you are happy to take part in the research, you will be asked to provide copies of your statement of purpose draft(s), email correspondence, and Facebook messages to the Principal Investigator. You will also be asked to sign a consent form to approve their use during your interview with the Principal Investigator, analysis, and anonymized incorporation into the final dissertation.

You will then participate in an audio-recorded interview with the Principal Investigator. Upon arrival, you will have the chance to ask any questions. During the interview, you will

be shown printed copies of your statement of purpose drafts, emails, and Facebook messages. The interview should take approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

After the interview, the transcript will be sent to you and you can request to take any parts out that you wish to be omitted from the analysis. All responses and portions of the Facebook messages that are incorporated into the final dissertation will be anonymized.

5. *Are there any potential risks in taking part?*

There are no clear risks in taking part in the interview and research process. If you feel at all at risk, the Principal Investigator is happy to answer any questions or respond to any concerns.

6. *Are there any benefits in taking part?*

There will be no direct benefit to you from taking part beyond contributing to education research and pedagogy development.

7. *Expenses and payments*

There will be no payment for taking part in this study.

8. *What happens to the data provided?*

The **research and personal/sensitive data** will be stored confidentially using an encrypted and password-protected file storage system. The researcher will have sole access to all personal/sensitive data and research data. Your responses will be anonymized by both name and institution. All research data and records will be stored for 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

I would like your permission to use direct quotes and to use anonymised data in future studies. All personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before information is shared with other researchers or results are made public.

9. *Will the research be published?*

The research may / will be published on student thesis online publications.

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be openly accessible.

10. Who is organising and funding the research?

There is no funding organizer for this research.

11. Who has reviewed this study?

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: [REDACTED]).

12. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to the relevant researcher [REDACTED] or their supervisor [REDACTED], who will do their best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the relevant chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner:

Chair, **Department of Education Research Ethics Committee**, Liam Gearon, Email: liam.gearon@education.ox.ac.uk

13. Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix M: English Teacher Information Sheet

Where to turn?: A case study of Czech student and local advisor experiences of writing statements of purpose for undergraduate Anglophone admissions

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. *What is the purpose of this research?*

This study will investigate the landscape of writing instruction, feedback, and challenges for Czech secondary school students writing statements of purpose (SoPs) in English for Anglophone undergraduate admissions and make recommendations for Czech teachers to assist EFL students in this endeavour. As a result, this study aims to increase Czech secondary school students' access to international education opportunities in Anglophone countries.

2. *Why have I been invited to take part?*

You have been invited to participate because of your experience with Anglophone undergraduate admissions statements of purpose written by Czech secondary school students.

The inclusion criteria for the study include the undergraduate admissions in Anglophone countries as experienced by Czech secondary school students.

3. *Do I have to take part?*

No. You can ask questions about the study before deciding whether or not to participate. If you do agree to participate, you may withdraw yourself and your data from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without penalty, by advising the researchers of this decision. If you choose to withdraw, all data will be securely discarded and omitted from the final research study. Please inform the Principal Investigator of your decision within 24 hours after the end of the interview.

Once the interview data has been transcribed, you will have the opportunity to review the interview transcript. At that time, you may highlight any sections that you wish to be omitted from the analysis.

4. *What will happen to me if I take part in the research?*

If you are happy to take part in the research, you will be asked to provide a copy of your Facebook message on January 12, 2017 to the Principal Investigator. You will also be asked to sign a consent form to approve its use during your interview with the Principal Investigator, analysis, and anonymized incorporation into the final dissertation.

You will then participate in an audio-recorded interview with the Principal Investigator. Upon arrival, you will have the chance to ask any questions. During the interview, you will be shown printed copies of your statement of purpose drafts and the Facebook messages. The interview should take approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

After the interview, the transcript will be sent to you and you can request to take any parts out that you wish to be omitted from the analysis. All responses and portions of the Facebook messages that are incorporated into the final dissertation will be anonymized.

5. *Are there any potential risks in taking part?*

There are no clear risks in taking part in the interview and research process. If you feel at all at risk, the Principal Investigator is happy to answer any questions or respond to any concerns.

6. *Are there any benefits in taking part?*

There will be no direct benefit to you from taking part beyond contributing to education research and pedagogy development.

7. *Expenses and payments*

There will be no payment for taking part in this study.

8. *What happens to the data provided?*

The **research and personal/sensitive data** will be stored confidentially using an encrypted and password-protected file storage system. The researcher will have sole access to all personal/sensitive data and research data. Your responses will be anonymized by both name and institution. All research data and records will be stored for 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

I would like your permission to use direct quotes and to use anonymised data in future studies. All personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before information is shared with other researchers or results are made public.

9. *Will the research be published?*

The research may / will be published on student thesis online publications.

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be openly accessible.

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There is no funding organizer for this research.

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Chair, **Department of Education Research Ethics Committee**, Liam Gearon, Email: liam.gearon@education.ox.ac.uk

13. Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix N: Local Experts and University Gatekeepers Information Sheet

Where to turn?: A case study of Czech student and local advisor experiences of writing statements of purpose for undergraduate Anglophone admissions

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. *What is the purpose of this research?*

This study will investigate the landscape of writing instruction, feedback, and challenges for Czech secondary school students writing statements of purpose (SoPs) in English for Anglophone undergraduate admissions and make recommendations for Czech teachers to assist EFL students in this endeavour. As a result, this study aims to increase Czech secondary school students' access to international education opportunities in Anglophone countries.

2. *Why have I been invited to take part?*

You have been invited to participate because of your experience with Anglophone undergraduate admissions statements of purpose written by Czech secondary school students.

The inclusion criteria for the study include the undergraduate admissions in Anglophone countries as experienced by Czech secondary school students.

3. *Do I have to take part?*

No. You can ask questions about the study before deciding whether or not to participate. If you do agree to participate, you may withdraw yourself and your data from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without penalty, by advising the researchers of this decision. If you choose to withdraw, all data will be securely discarded and omitted from the final research study. Please inform the Principal Investigator of your decision within 24 hours after the end of the interview.

4. *What will happen to me if I take part in the research?*

You will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview with the Principal Investigator. This should take approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. Upon arrival, you will have the chance to ask any questions. If you are still happy to take part, you will then be asked to sign a consent form.

After the interview, the transcript will be sent to you and you can request to take any parts out that you wish to be omitted from the analysis. All responses that are incorporated into the final dissertation will be anonymized

5. *Are there any potential risks in taking part?*

There are no clear risks in taking part in the interview and research process. If you feel at all at risk, the Principal Investigator is happy to answer any questions or respond to any concerns.

6. *Are there any benefits in taking part?*

There will be no direct benefit to you from taking part beyond contributing to education research and pedagogy development.

7. *Expenses and payments*

There will be no payment for taking part in this study.

8. *What happens to the data provided?*

The **research and personal/sensitive data** will be stored confidentially using an encrypted and password-protected file storage system. The researcher will have sole access to all personal/sensitive data and research data. Your responses will be anonymized by both name and institution. All research data and records will be stored for 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

I would like your permission to use direct quotes and to use anonymised data in future studies. All personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before information is shared with other researchers or results are made public.

9. *Will the research be published?*

The research may / will be published on student thesis online publications.

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be openly accessible.

10. *Who is organising and funding the research?*

There is no funding organizer for this research.

11. *Who has reviewed this study?*

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: ED-C1A-17-114).

12. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to the relevant researcher + [REDACTED] or their supervisor [REDACTED], who will do their best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the relevant chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner:

Chair, **Department of Education Research Ethics Committee**, Liam Gearon, Email: liam.gearon@education.ox.ac.uk

13. Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix O: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Where to turn?: A case study of Czech student and local advisor experiences of writing statements of purpose for undergraduate Anglophone admissions

Purpose of Study: This study will investigate the landscape of writing instruction, feedback, and challenges for Czech secondary school students writing statements of purpose (SoPs) in English for Anglophone undergraduate admissions and make recommendations for Czech teachers to assist EFL students in this endeavour.


		<i>Please initial each box</i>
1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or academic penalty.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by designated individuals from the University of Oxford where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to access my data.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I understand how this research will be written up and published.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	I consent to being audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	I understand how audio recordings/ written materials will be used in research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	I give permission to be anonymously directly quoted in the research publication.	<input type="checkbox"/>

11	I agree to take part in the study and assign to the researcher all copyright in my contribution for use in all work stemming from this project and future projects.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Optional:	I agree for research data collected in this study to be given to researchers, including those working outside of the EU, to be used in other research studies. I understand that any data that leave the research group will be fully anonymised so that I cannot be identified.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Optional:	I agree for my personal data to be kept in a secure database for the purpose of contacting me about future studies.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant

Date

Signature


Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Appendix P: Student Interview Transcription

Researcher (R): So, to start can you tell me some introduction, just about you, your name, and sort of your education up until the point where you were applying to school.

Student (S): My name is Student, I'm from the Czech Republic, I'm 20 years old currently and I'm studying at Scottish University just now. My education was normal regulation back to Czech system. You know, kindergarten, then I started my actual compulsory education when I was 6. So I didn't start - one year later. I attended **Zakladní Škola** (Elementary School), in Czech Town. And then when I was in 5th grade, when I was 10 I applied for **osmileté gymnázium** (eight-year university preparatory school) in Czech Town, which I attended. Yeah I got accepted and I attended the 8 classes, so 8 years of studying and when I was in, so, 6th grade, so first in high school, I was going through, I got on an exchange program to US State, US Town, where I attended 1 year of US Town High School. Do you want to know which courses I took?

R: Sure

S: Ok, so I took English, which was for Juniors. I did US History, World Geography, Economics, US Government, Psychology, Sociology, Choir and Principles of Business, I think that's it. Then I came back, I tried to skip the year that I missed, didn't succeed. So, I got one year below, and I continued, you know, the studies that I stopped in Czech. And I graduated, 2017. And I got it from Czech Language and Literature, English grammar and literature and hearing and stuff, and then History and Geography.

R: And so before you went to the US or in Czech Republic in general, what was your English like, when did you start learning English?

S: Oh my god it was horrible. I started learning English I think when in 2nd grade, but I was awful. I left to US State, I had 3s with English Teacher and I knew just the basics. Like I could understand conversation on the talking part, like the basic conversations. My grammar during talking was awful and I just couldn't get better grade than 3. So I struggled when I came to US State. It took me 3 months to get to the point when I felt comfortable talking and having a conversation to someone.

R: Before we look at this [the materials], what then made you decide that you want to study abroad for university?

S: Well it was my friend, (name omitted). She studied in British Columbia. She was on exchange, as well. She was one year older. So when I was third year she was graduating. I was on and off about university in Czech, university abroad. And it was mostly that I will stick to universities in Czech, I was focusing on Czech University studying law. But, I just felt there was something wrong with it. Like I wanted it, but it was just, I was not excited about it. And I remember she applied to university in England, don't ask me which one, I know she was studying Criminology. But I don't know which university it

was. But, she was selling me her old books at the end of my third year because she already graduated she was sure that she's going. She said a sentence, "What people like us will do in Czech? We don't fit in." And it just like really shook me because I knew that she's right, like I'm not that type of person. You know there is a saying, "You're born exchange student." You're not becoming, you're born, or you're not. And I knew that there is you know, that's who I am. I'm not supposed to be stuck in one country, but try more. And I knew that it's not US State anymore, it's not America, it's just too far away, it's not convenient for four years or more. So, UK was the easiest choice.

R: Cool, so I have here a timeline of the time that we worked together on writing your personal statement if you want to look at it [TIMELINE] really quickly.

S: I like December 26th.

S: I thought it was just couple of days, it was weeks!

R: Yeah, well this is from the time you messaged me until the time you actually sent the application.

S: Yeah, yeah.

R: Ok so, the portion that we are going to look at specifically is this one "Focused Text" so it's from January 12th, from, it was like your time so 8:35pm to 8:43pm. So if you want to just read it quickly and then the parts that are in yellow is the parts that I'm going to sort of ask you to talk about.

S: Oh my god. Uh huh. Ok. Yeah.

R: So for the first one, so what types of writing had you done before either in Czech or in English in your school?

S: In Czech, none, you know. Czech system doesn't have that style of writing at all. And we don't even do essays or anything like that. So I wasn't used to, if we do write something it's more literature-based. So you write how to describe things and you know, these kinds of things. So I didn't know that. When I was in US State, yes I did write essays, but again they were more literature-based, so Great Gatsby, these kind of topics. I never had to write anything about myself. When I was applying to US State for the exchange program it was much easier because they knew I don't know English. And it was just more like letter, like actual letter, just like age, name, my hobbies, and what questions I want to know about the host family. So I never had to write anything like this.

R: And how about in English class, in the Czech Republic?

S: Yeah, we write something, but it's more like, short, I can't call it essay, it's not even an essay, it's just writing. It's more like argumentative, so like pros and cons, or stories, formal and informal letters, you know just the basics. And you actually need normal, like

you need this as well, but you use daily more when you're applying for a job, when you need to email an office or when you're emailing a friend when you write a postcard, these kinds of things.

R: And so, can you think of any maybe difference between what good writing for writing in Czech is like and what good writing for writing in, like is there any difference in your English class and your Czech class what your teachers wanted you to do?

S: Of course, everything. A difference even how you do, you separate the paragraphs. You know when you write in English you usually skip a line. In Czech you make a bigger space at the beginning. It's just so different, it's just everything is different. When you study high school in English, you need to write something, they expect that you will repeat yourself. You know, you won't have synonym for every single word. If you are describing something, there is a high chance that you will use that word a lot. When I write in Czech, I can't do that. And it's more, it's my native language, I need to be advanced, I need to know how to make complicated sentences, I need to know how to link words, how to connect it, how you, I should be able to fully represent anything that I'm writing in Czech. So I find it much more, you know they expect. It's, Czech language and writing is this advanced, like really, really high. And then English is just advanced, but you're learning it. So, it keeps, from what I know now, and I know English, it's really basic. But it was difficult before.

R: So then you said, "What I wrote is my maximum, I know it." So, here is the essay [DRAFT 1] that you first sent me on, what was it December, or no, January 8 or 9. This is what you sent me if you would like to read it for a minute.

S: Oh my god. It's not that bad. I thought it was - ok.

S: I repeat myself.

R: Also, it goes on the back, it's printed double-sided.

S: Yeah ok. It's not that bad. I was expecting much worse.

S: I used a fancy word.

S: Ok.

R: So, you sent that to me January 9th and then we worked together until January 13 when you sent the second draft. Why did you believe that this was your maximum at the time?

S: Because I just couldn't think anymore. I was actually spending a lot of time. Like when I look back, it felt like 2 days. But, according to the timeline, and I know that I worked, because before I wrote all of this, it took me some time. And I just couldn't, it wasn't that you know, "What I wrote is my maximum, I know it," it's not in terms of

English, as much as I just couldn't, I didn't know, I couldn't write any more or in better way, about myself in the good English. I just thought it's actually my maximum, there's nothing I could do more about it because I was miserable, I just couldn't think anymore. And it was so hard, especially just to write about myself, I never had to do that. And combined with the English, it was just such a big struggle and I just believed I can't do better anymore.

R: So the next part, so you said that you spent almost a month on it and even you wrote me December 8th and then you sent this to me January 8th, so it was about a month. So, what happened between then?

S: Well I looked up a bunch of videos on YouTube on how to do personal statements and there was a bunch of examples on UCAS and even university sites and stuff. So I remember that I did my small research about how to write it, what should be in there, shouldn't. And then I was trying to combine all of it. And then I was playing around with the English because I wanted to be actually properly spelled and everything like that. And yeah I was just putting it all together. And it was Christmas, so it was just break. But, yeah, I was mainly trying to figure out what exactly am I supposed to be writing. And then, because I thought it's supposed to be more like a CV, but just stating, not marketing myself. So that was the hardest part, like realized what should I write and how should I write it.

R: And so the websites and things like this. How did you find them?

S: Just Google and then UCAS. Because when you don't know, UCAS has like the links to personal statement examples, tips, what to do, not to do. And I have the links for YouTube if you want.

R: And did you go to any other people for help in that time?

S: I went for help to English Teacher, but I'm not sure if it was before Christmas or after. I can't tell you the day, I just can't remember. But I consulted with her as well, I just don't know which period of time.

R: And by consulted with her -

S: Grammar, mainly grammar. Not much what should I write, in a way, how should I write it. And just mainly like checking if, how many mistakes and stuff like that. And I remember that she sent me, I don't know if it was the first draft or the second, but I remember she sent the documents back to me and they were like crossed, you know mistakes. And because I was panicking, I truly was. It was a lot of pressure. It was a long, it was 3 years since I'd been to US State almost, so I forgot a lot of my English. Now it's getting better, but I was struggling with the English much more than I was expected to be. You know I expected to be easier, but actually it wasn't. With her it was grammar, and mainly these kinds of things. With you it was how.

R: And so when you consulted with her, was it you like sent it to her by email or did you meet with her in person?

S: I think both. I sent it to her through Facebook and then I met her in the kabinet couple of times.

R: Then, after asking, having her help, so why did you decide to ask me for help and what did you expect from me that was different?

S: I knew that your culture, that you're American. And I knew that this is like, if I'm not mistaken, you were working for something that was dealing with these kind of application. I just knew that you have experience with these kinds of things and how to write them. And you're just amazing person.

R: Thank you.

S: I just knew that. And I liked you how you were teaching and your approach. And I knew that I can ask you for help. You know like you're just approachable. So I knew you have experience. So I didn't know who else to ask and I knew that you will know because you just need to write these things.

R: So when you sent the draft to me, what types of corrections or what were you expecting me to reply - ?

S: Just guiding. I didn't expect you to write it for me or anything like that. I just needed to get feedback if I'm doing, like, in which way I should more go. Like is this right or is this completely wrong? And yeah, it's just, which part should I work on more, which needs to change. It's just, I just felt so lost, I had no idea what I'm doing. And it was so important to me that it didn't help. If i would be more calm, I think i would do much better than I did. Yeah, so I was looking for a guidance, and help and feedback.

R: And why did you feel so much pressure?

S: Family. Myself. And when I realized I want to go abroad, just the feeling that I wouldn't get in and I would be stuck in Czech. I just couldn't handle it. Just the idea that I would be stuck somewhere, that I - You know me, I need to be on the move. Yeah, just and my dad. He was a - said that if I won't do it, I might not go to university at all and these kinds of things. So it was a big pressure. And it was from everyone, you know. Half of the people say that I can't do it, so it was another pressure to it, like yes I can. Then it was pressure from me, like if you fail, you're stuck here. And there's one wasted year and I already had a year which I couldn't waste, you know because I was in US State so then I was one year behind. It was just a combination of opinions, circumstances and mainly myself, I know it, but yeah, it was bad.

R: Let's see the next one is so you said, "No, we are writing a whole different piece." So here is the corrections, feedback that I sent from your first draft. If you want to just review them?

S: Yeah, I remember this, really, really well.

R: So you sent me the first draft, then I sent you this [DRAFT 1 FEEDBACK] by email, and then we Skyped for about 28 minutes.

S: Yeah I remember that, yeah.

R: So how did you feel opening this and then I guess when we Skyped after?

S: I was panicking. You know, it was just like, I knew you are right but it's just the thing that I, it wasn't about doing it again or making it different, but it was just like, wow, I'm just completely wrong. And then I have to redo it. It was just more of like I have to write it from scratch because it's just wrong. And it was just, panicking yeah because I spent time on it, I thought it will be useful. And then just you know, just redo it because you have wrong structure, you don't use the sentences, the grammar is not ideal, you repeat yourself because I had "learned" there millions of times. I have "learn" the verb like 15 times in each paragraph! And I just didn't know how to, you know it in the comments you say a lot how to expand on something or how to more describe it and stuff, I just didn't know how. So for me it was really challenging let's say to write it in this way because for me it meant start over. And then it was like month of my work just out a window. So it wasn't that I would disagree. I knew you are right, I knew it was wrong. But it was just my feeling that I had to do it all like from the scratch. Like it was whole wrong and I couldn't use almost nothing from it. So that was the feeling that I had.

R: So was it difficult at all to understand these comments? Like what I was asking you to think about or what I was asking you to do differently?

S: A little bit, yes. Especially, "Have you been involved?," "Had an experience" these like small phrases, I understood, I just wasn't 100% sure what they meant. But I took my time. And I went through them slowly and when I wasn't sure I could use Google. But you know it was just - now, it's easy but at the point where I was struggling and I'm trying to understand. But I think they were pretty straightforward I mean I didn't, I don't remember that I wouldn't know at all. And if I didn't it was mainly because of my stress, not because I wouldn't understand.

R: And had you ever received comments like these -

S: No.

R: - before on any type of writing?

S: Yes. Yes, in US State on my Great Gatsby piece. But it was really positive feedback. So yeah, that was the only thing. But from Czech, no, or like, no.

R: So you received this, we Skyped and then how did you go about starting to maybe work on some of these things?

S: I just went through it. I just, you know comment from comment trying to fixed it. And then just played with it trying it-- right or wrong. Will this work? No it won't. Where do I put this? It was just experimenting, if it will work. If it's how it should be. Can I do this? Does make sense? And these kinds of things. So, step by step.

R: You then say, "We changed every single paragraph and I'm writing the informations in a different way."

S: Yeah.

R: So, here is then after we, after all of this when we were sort of finished working together, then this is the draft you sent me [DRAFT 2]. So take a minute to read it.

S: It's similar to what I was turning in, which I didn't read in a while. But I think that's similar.

R: Wait similar to what, you said?

S: To the one that I actually sent to the university.

R: Yeah, so if you look at the timeline, so you sent this second one to me after all these messages and then I sent you some small feedback. And then by the time I woke up you had already sent it to the university. So I don't know how much of these changes you made to it but after I then sent it to you, but this is the one that, after we had written with each other.

S: Yeah, the one it was supposed to be. Yeah.

S: I haven't read this. Yeah I remember.

R: So, if you look at this, so Draft 2 and you look at Draft 1 so in what ways are they different?

S: Structure. Well your comments, like what you commented, I tried to change it. So the structure, I moved the information according to the topic or the area. And I think I tried to expand more on the things you said that they are important. I think I focused more on the culture representatives and yeah, oh I remember this, "As an exchange student I tend to approach the ordinary things with an international point of view." Because we were talking about being an international student and yeah, I remember that you suggested to put something like that in it. So, it's just, yeah it's just - It just makes more sense, the

second draft for me. It's more structured, the English got a little bit better, I have different verbs and different phrases and yeah. Yeah, I can't say much about that.

R: So actually going back to what you said a few minutes ago...

S: Yeah.

R: - did what we worked on together, was it actually writing from scratch?

S: No. No, it was just moving around and more expanding on certain informations. It was more like prioritizing what is important from the first draft, then expanding on more, and then put it all together and doing a structure. Which I didn't know we were doing before. But, yeah, looking back and reading it, I think it's not definitely from scratch. It's not different piece, it's not different information, it's just what is important and where to put it and how to write it better.

R: So why do you think it felt like writing from scratch?

S: I was exhausted. And it was just a bunch of comments and as I said, for me it meant I have to write differently. So for me, in that moment, it was writing from the scratch. That's why it felt like that.

R: And so did writing like this, and also getting the comments, did it feel different from how you had written in English or in Czech?

S: Yes, of course. Yeah it's just - we would never write this in Czech! It doesn't exist in Czech! So, yeah, it's totally different, in every single aspect. And we don't receive feedback on what to do and how to - you know, it's either bad or it's good. So it was totally different experience for me.

R: Can you think of any of the - when you said "all of the aspects - "

S: Can you think of like specific?

S: Structure again. Just the fact that I have to promote myself and to present myself as the best of the best, you need to take me to your uni because I'm valuable to be at your uni. Actually, just the fact that I had to pick which things are valuable in my life and which need, are worth to mention. And your comments that you are really specific and that not only you said about the grammar and about you need to move this to a different paragraph because you know US State goes with US State you don't need to mention it in every single paragraph. But also just to expand it. This is important you need to evaluate it more, you need to focus on it. So, these little things made it the biggest difference because then it felt like writing from scratch. Because it wasn't just about grammar, it wasn't just about moving things, but it was also was about what is this exactly about? What do you write in it? You know like the plot of my life. So it was that, it was just different from anything I had written before. And just because I had to focus on English,

that was also another thing. Like I can't use "learn" in every single sentence anymore, it wouldn't be enough. So I actually had to Google, I had to ask you, I had to ask English Teacher, because I just didn't know. I didn't know there are so many ways how to say it differently. So these things.

R: And in the part when you're saying that in Czech you had never written anything before about your life or why you're the best or anything like that. Why, I guess - what makes that so uncomfortable?

S: It's Czech culture, at least that's my opinion, I think. It's really, really Czech thing that you're not the best, you don't know the best. If you brag, it's a bad thing. We don't have something that's called you know, healthy confidence. I think that's a part of Communism thinking. Everyone is the same, you can't stand out, if you stand out it's a kind of bad thing. It's just how the Czech system works, even in education. We're not, our creative thinking is not exactly the one that is getting developed the most. We are not allowing us to think independently, how to criticize, how to analyze, how to make an argument. So I think just to actually think about yourself in this way, like oh, am I capable of something? Am I good at something? Can I even write it? You know, ask a Czech, you know it. Ask a Czech person, what you're good at? How many people will tell? It's just, it's just the whole society thing. It's just - I think when I was in US State, and I know that Americans are the opposite, they are proud of it. Czech people don't own it. They won't ever say "Oh, I'm good at this, I'm good at this." And if they do, they will be super humble about it. Who's not humble about it, he will have a hard time. It's just not a thing you do, you're not praising yourself, you're not embracing yourself, it's just not what you should do.

R: Can you think of any examples of in school or outside of school even where you sort of learned not to be confident or learned - ?

S: Not to be confident - learned. Oh my god, in school, all the time. Specific example - Oh, my professor Mr. Teacher, geography and math. I love him, but he was the typical example of keep your shut mouth, like mouth shut, and not and do what you're supposed to be doing. When you're trying to deep into something he would go like, "Well, it's not your place to say." Or you know the little sentences like, "you are learning it because you need to know," "Because I said so," "Because this is how you should do it." You know, it's not place where you should think. It's just, "I'm the teacher, I said it so you're going to write it down." Or sometimes it happened that he had the old information. And so for example, Classmate, and he would go like, "But professor there are not 8,000 people, there are 9,000 people." "No, there are 8,000 people." "But look, I have it here and here, I read it there and there." "No I said it 8, it will be 8." Just things like that. You know - when you would say - I actually - When I was on a primary school, I was drawing - Oh, my god I don't how the animal is called, **krteček** (little mole).

R: Like the little mole.

S: Yeah, I remember I was so proud of it. And I said it aloud. And the teacher would say something like, "Well, it's not the best I've seen." You know, it just, it really puts you in the position. Or even like private things. Like when I was younger, and I was growing up, my mom, she was the true lady. And she heard me, one boy complimented me on something, I don't know if it was a T-shirt or something. But I was young, I was 10, 9 or something like that. And I smiled and I said "thank you." And my mom would say, "Oh, you're such a whore." You know, it's just the culture of things. You just don't brag, you just don't say you know, you're just not the best, you're just not the better. It's just the authority is the authority and if they say so, it's the way. And it works with the family, as well. Like what dad says, nothing goes through it. We are not having conversation, we are not argumentative, it's just - You just learn it along the way.

R: So actually, in writing this - in other types of writing, maybe there is some authority that you are trying to fit the information to be what they think or something like that, so who is the authority for this writing?

S: Well that was the thing, there wasn't, there just wasn't. And I was so confused by it. You know, I just didn't have clear way, how should I - I didn't have the points- you have to have this, you have to have this, it needs to fit this. It was just - write a letter - about yourself - that needs to impress - someone. Needs to present you as the best you could, can, and you have to convince them that they need you and it has to be like grammatically and everything in English correct. And I was like, f***. Sorry for the language, but it was just my thinking. No, I would really need the clear structure, point by point what I need to do and then I would do it.

R: Got it. Ok, so let's see. So, I had sent you the UCAS website and you said -

S: Oh, you sent it to me!

R: Well, I think, so I sent it to you as like a - I think so this was like some sort of - they had sort of a structure for you to follow or like a something like that.

S: Oh yeah I remember. Yeah, yeah -

R: So, but you then said "No, I was writing the original draft," so Draft 1, "from this."

S: Yeah so I was looking at it.

R: So I guess when you first had looked at this before, like what did you do or how did you try to follow it? If you remember.

S: I can't remember. I remember that I was reading it and trying to. I remember that they said that it needs to have like a experience, work experience, it needs to have your hobbies. So I remember it was structure like topics, like work experience, why you want to study this, what are your skills and hobbies, and what are your other experiences. But, that's the only thing I can recall actually. Like, I can't tell you if it was something else.

R: Yeah, so I remember like just thinking now actually they had some boxes that you could type in.

S: Oh yes, you're right and then they connect it. Oh my god, that was so awful. I hated how it was separated because then I thought it doesn't make sense. You know, if you write one separate thing and then you write a different thing about a totally different subject it doesn't connect. So, I hated it. It just, it didn't work with me. So I actually did the questions, but I wrote it in my document because I just hated it that it has been separated. Because I just, it felt like completely different things and making like single paragraphs, not a whole piece. But I remember I was reading the questions, I was trying to remember the topics. But, I didn't write it in the boxes.

R: So I guess then in what way then did it help?

S: Well because, it, the questions they said which topics I need to cover. And I think I left the order in which they had it. I think I left it the same. If I'm not mistaken, I'm not sure.

R: Yeah I don't know, in the first draft if you -

S: Well this one [DRAFT 1, PARAGRAPH 1] was moved to the second [DRAFT 2, PARAGRAPH 2], yeah I think so.

R: So when you were writing this draft, this is the first one.

S: That was why I want to study it [DRAFT 1, PARAGRAPH 1], I think. Yeah because it is the same as this [DRAFT 2]. See, it was because of the Dragon's Den, why I got excited about the subject and stuff.

R: So this is the one [DRAFT 2] after we worked together.

S: Yeah.

R: So, I think, so you're saying here [FOCUSED TEXT] that you had been using this [UCAS WEBSITE] to write this one [DRAFT 1].

S: Yeah, because I had already I think I had told you already as well. Because I remembered that I was looking at the UCAS website and then I found it there. So that's why I kept it in a - you know, I didn't, but I tried it like, why I want to study it, this is like my school, this is what happened after my school, like my Maturita exam because I haven't taken it yet. And it's the same in here [DRAFT 2], see I have why school, this is work and - no, I actually swapped work and my extracurriculars. Here is swapped, but and conclusion. Yeah, but I think it was really similar so I know I was actually looking at it, so I know that I was looking at the UCAS website.

R: Let's see, so you were saying that you had gone to YouTube and you got those links, from the UCAS, some of those links from the UCAS -

S: And the Unilink actually, because they shared it on the Facebook page, some of the videos -

R: Which -

S: Unilink, the one I -

R: Oh, Unilink, yes -

S: Because before I even messaged you for the first time like in November or September. I was thinking which university so I contacted the Unilink as well. But they told me I need to have all of the 5 universities within their partnership universities. If I have different ones, they can't help me because it's one personal statement, it's one filling up and stuff. So, I didn't do it with them, but I had their Facebook page and they were sharing the personal statement videos, so I had it from there.

R: And how did you find them?

S: By absolute, it was just a random. I think I was just googling "How to get to British universities" what should I do and stuff like that. And their website popped up. And then I was reading through. And I think they are doing amazing job, it's just it is limited to the universities they are partnered with, which unfortunately weren't the universities I wanted.

R: And why not? Or what were you looking for?

S: Scotland. Because I knew it's free. And my friend is studying Stirling and I heard that it's amazing so I knew I want to try Scotland. And I wanted to do Cardiff, which they didn't have a partnership with.

R: So how had you found Cardiff or like the different, other than your friend?

S: At Gaudeamus. They were actually there. My friend is obvious, like we were in touch and he was talking about how it's different from English universities and stuff like that. And Cardiff, in Gaudeamus. So they had like fair of international universities all over the world and Cardiff and - one more - I can't recall. Cardiff and another university in England, they had stalls there, so I was talking to them.

R: And where was the fair?

S: In Brno.

R: In Brno, mhm.

S: Yeah, Gaudeamus Brno.

R: And how did you hear about the fair?

S: School.

R: Ok.

S: It's almost compulsory to go.

R: Oh, ok.

S: Yeah, because it's all of universities, all together. So you go -

R: The Czech universities too?

S: Yes. Yes, yes. It's just, it's mainly Czech universities and there is a small corner of international universities. It's getting bigger now. I think it was the second year they had it. So it's mainly for Czech universities. You know like Charles University has the big one. And that they compete beauty, **VUT** (Brno University of Technology), **ČVUT** (Czech Technical University in Prague) and it's kind of it's a good fair. It's even like entertaining and stuff. It's good for students. But yeah, it's almost, everyone - You don't have to go, but you should go. And most of the students do.

R: And were there many people there with you who went to this like international section?

S: No, I was the only one, I was the only one. And at the end, there was only two people from my class who went abroad. Which was me, and Classmate who went to British Columbia, in Vancouver.

R: And how many people are in your class, for the record?

S: 27. I think 27, 26. Do you want me to count it?

R: No.

S: I think it's 27, 26.

R: And about also how many people also were passing Maturita the same year from your school?

S: Like all of the -

R: Like all the different tracks if you think about it?

S: Ok, B was really small class, it was like 20 of them. So that's 46. Do you want a **pedagogický** (pedagogical), as well?

R: Yes.

S: So that's 30 each. So that's already 120 something. And then you have to count **obchodní** (business) as well because it's our school. And that's 3 classes as well, so let's say 250, roughly. Yeah because each class - yeah 250.

R: And did you know of anyone else besides you and Classmate who went outside Czech Republic?

S: From our year, no. I don't know anyone and I don't think that any of our year. Other years, obviously yes. But I think that our year, was, we are the only ones.

R: So, then I sent you this [UCAS WEBSITE], and you said "The messages are better." So, I have here... so this is, these are some of our messages from the day before [MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT], so January 11th. So it's you know a bit long, but if you want to just read through them.

S: Yeah, "It sounds forced and unnatural." That was pretty much my whole impression of the whole piece!

S: "It's nothing like me." See yeah, again.

S: Yeah. "But don't get me wrong, not forced from you, but the concept of the statement itself." That's what I'm saying all the time, it was just...

S: That was the beginning.

S: You're so patient. Wow.

S: It's hilarious now, that I remember crying my eyes out.

S: Yeah.

R: So, why were the messages helpful?

S: They were straightforward and I finally could fully understand what exactly am I doing wrong. So, as I said you had a lot of patience. And you seriously tried to say it in the easiest possible way. And I think I actually understood what needs to be done, like what exactly am I supposed to fix. That's why.

R: Was there a difference in the fact that I was sort of giving you comments in English versus when you talked to your teachers in Czech about it.

S: Yeah. Of course, yeah that's the thing. And again you had more relevant comments than other - because even though I had a great English Teacher, she just didn't have experience with this. So when you uh gave me your feedback and your suggestions, I know they are right. I didn't have to doubt if it's the right way how to write it or not. So I think that's why.

R: So even after you showed her the first draft and she gave you feedback, you doubted it?

S: Well, it was more on grammar feedback. It wasn't on the concept. And the couple of suggestions that I received, they didn't fit into description. So I knew they are not quite how it's supposed to be but I just didn't know any better, because I just didn't know. So I think that's the reason. And I completely trusted you and I just - It was obvious that you knew what you are talking about. So when you, you can just tell. Like when we were talking, when you were writing, I could - you didn't doubt you didn't think you were just, "Oh this is better" "you might focus on this" and you didn't hesitate and that was big deal for me because I was hesitating myself. I didn't need to look at another person hesitating with me. So that was really, really helpful.

R: And so you said that when your teacher gave you the feedback and then you knew it didn't fit with the description, what description?

S: With, that I found on the UCAS or in the YouTube videos. Not description, like the points that I should have included. Like the small things that I knew it should be there or not didn't fit into what she suggested.

R: In terms of the feedback that I gave you. I gave you feedback on Skype, in the document with Track Changes, and then in these messages. So, was any one or combination more helpful or less helpful?

S: I think this [MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT] was the best. I can't recall if it was on Skype or where it was.

R: This was on Facebook messenger.

S: Ok, that was the best. And also Skype. Skype was amazing. I remember that really good. I have it really deep in my memory. Because, I'm more talkative person. So when you talk to me and I don't understand it's easier to ask. You can - It's just a flow of conversation, so I found it more natural than actually typing, especially if it's a different language. Because I learned it in the way of going, and listening, and talking because I was forced to, I didn't have a choice. So for me, English is much more easier to talk, than to write.

R: And you mean you learned it this way in -

S: In US State. Yeah, in US State. Because when I came to US State I barely knew English so from the beginning it was drawing, legs, arms. And I just didn't have a choice. So then you learn it by listening and talking. I had, I have lot of times, I get myself into a lot of situations when people... or even I was tutoring small children English and they would go "Oh and why you do this?" and I'm like, "Yeah, I can't tell, I just know how you should say it and don't ask me how it is." Because I didn't learn it the classic way most Czech students learn it. Yes, I have good grammar I think, like the base is good. But, I have more the English from what I heard and talked like than actually studying from the book.

R: And that's from, because you were in US State?

S: In US State, and I had to. Yeah, I didn't have time to actually properly study grammar or English and tons of [unknown word], I had to just have conversations.

R: So, Skype was the most helpful from this -

S: And then the Facebook.

R: And so then why was this [MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT] more helpful than this, the Track Changes.

S: Because I could react to it. You know this is not, this is really good for the long feedbacks. For the more structure ones and stuff like that. For how to write it, the sentences, and really the things that we talk about in these messages, are much more, you know I could ask, I could react, it was faster, it was like smaller things, like details. The overall feedback was really good when the structure was bad and there was a lot of things, you could see it, it was clear to see. In Facebook it tends to get quite messy. So in these big feedbacks, it's hard to find it and correct it, and it takes a lot of time and it's just, and you can't ask questions because then it will move up again. So, I think this [DRAFT 1 FEEDBACK] was really good for the first feedback because that was the biggest feedback with the biggest mistakes and just the big things. And then the smaller details, Facebook was better because I could reply and I could ask.

R: And so other than the fact that your teacher gave you mostly feedback on grammar, in terms of the style of it, was there, did she use anything like this [DRAFT 1 FEEDBACK] or like this [MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT] or when you talked in person was it sort of similar to how we talked on Skype? If you remember -

S: I remember that the feedback on grammar she sent me in the document, like she corrected the document that I sent her and then she sent it back.

R: Like the Track Changes?

S: Exactly, something like that, it was just a word in different color. And so that was the grammar and couple of suggestions but nothing big like when it comes to style. And then

when we were talking in person, yeah it was similar to on Skype. It just wasn't as straight to the point because as I said, she didn't have experience with it as well. So, yeah.

R: Ok, and then, the last thing you said, "I don't know the words, how to put them into a sentence."

S: Very, very true. That was, you know, there were a couple of things I wanted to express, I just didn't know how. I didn't have the words, it's actually how I wrote it. I just don't know the words, and I don't know how to put them into a sentence. I just didn't have the vocabulary I didn't have the advanced English for it. It would be really, super hard for me to do it in Czech, not alone in English.

R: Yeah. And so, did you feel this way that you didn't have the words about all your writing in English or was it just writing this statement of purpose?

S: No, this, this statement. I was usually the first one, after US State, I was the first one who finished writings and stuff. It was just this piece. Because it was so important to me and it needed to be totally different level than I was writing in Czech during our classes. And also I passed FCE and I got grade A, so level C1, even though it was FCE. But that was 6 months after I left US State, so everything was really in my brain. And it was again, it was opinion essay and it was one informal letter, or formal letter, so it was easy for me, I had it trained. But this was just so different to anything that I had written ever before that I just didn't know how it express it. I didn't know how to express it in Czech, in Czech. And if I would say it in Czech, it would be so complicated, or difficult or advanced that I just didn't have the skills to say it in English.

R: So, was there any particular type of like language knowledge that was for example different in this than in the opinion essay, which maybe was also something sort of more advanced? Like can you think of anything more specifically?

S: Can I look at - [DRAFT 1 / 2]?

R: Yeah of course as much as you want.

S: Uh, does vocabulary count?

R: Yeah so some examples, vocabulary, phrases -

S: Like, "reinforce my desire." I would never, ever write that on my own, or like without Google or anything like that. So, "It not only taught me." If I would say, "It taught me," but not "not only taught me." So, these phrases uh - how to put it all together? Like it looks so easy, but it's not easy. Follow it sentence by sentence and to keep up with the thought and do it correctly and you know this is meant to, you need to write this and you need to make the person who is reading it interested. You don't have to do that when you doing English writing in Czech.

R: Ok, so when you're writing in English in the Czech Republic.

S: It's just opinion essay. It's just what I think. It's like the boring things of the boring things. It's just something that I, it's grammatically correct, it makes sense, and I get a grade on it. This (the personal statement) needs to be excellent. And this needs to make the person who reads it being interested, wants to know more about you, want to not only know you more or find out more about you but actually the person needs to like he needs to get the impression that you are the student for the university. And that is so complicated, for me, to achieve it. And I would struggle with this even today and I think I got a lot better at writing things. So, this is just so different than, you know, words, structure, sentences, the style in which you are writing it and what are you writing about because that's one of the biggest issues that I had with it, that I actually have to write about myself.

R: So just going back to what you said about like you're writing for the audience of the university and they need to be interested in you. So when you were writing for an opinion essay in your English class in the Czech Republic, did you feel like the teacher was your audience or it wasn't important?

S: It wasn't important. It wasn't important to me because I knew that she is looking for something different than information that I wrote there. It wasn't about what is in there. Of course, it had to make sense. I couldn't say I that liked blue color because I'm in yellow. You know it's just it wouldn't make sense, but it didn't need to be original, it didn't need to be interesting, it didn't need to be special. It wasn't - yes, I need to in my Czech language in our Czech writings we would need to actually write something that is exceptional, that makes sense, that is interesting, that is different, you know your personal style even put it. But it's just English, it didn't care and when you wrote it, it was grammatically correct, it made sense you just get 1. So I didn't care. Like I didn't care who is reading it. I knew my teacher will be reading it, but she is not grading *me* about what is it that I'm writing about. They would never give us points down because of the, uh I don't know how to say it, the **obsah** (content), like the actual what is in the essay.

R: Like the content?

S: Yes.

R: But in Czech you would?

S: You would, you definitely would.

R: So now, like looking sort of ahead, so or looking back. Is there anything you wish you would have done differently?

S: Yeah, I would calm down. I would calm down, like seriously. That is the one thing that I would do. And -I was just, if I would calm down it would mean that I would focus

more, I would sleep more, I wouldn't panic and I would try to maybe write different versions of it. Like more, I knew, you know it's easy to say now because I already know how it was supposed to look like and I know that I got in and I know that now I'm doing great. So, it's easy for me to say now. But I think I would try to write different versions of it and see what works the best for me. But, other than that I mean like without your help I would be completely lost, I wouldn't make it because I just didn't know. And I did my research so I wouldn't change much about it because I think that was the maximum I could do about it. But I would calm down that was one of the biggest issue I had.

R: And so, thinking back on it like why were you panicking? Or why didn't you write different versions?

S: I just didn't believe that I could do it, I just didn't know how and I didn't believe that I'm capable of writing different versions. I said it in somewhere that, "What I wrote is my maximum, I know it," and I truly believed that, that I can't combine the words differently that I don't know which other information I should put in. And I didn't know myself that much because I never had to think about it like that. So now I know which areas you know I'm good at and that I should sell more and promote more and on the other hand, which are my weaknesses or what are my weaknesses and on which I need to work on and embrace them as well because it's not about just the strengths and the things that you're good at but also you can say "Oh, I'm bad at this and this is where I need to improve." Which I think a lot of universities want to see that as well. Maybe not in the personal statement, but later on. So just not having the attitude of Czech person. Just like admit that I'm good at something, that I've experienced something and be able to write it in a sentence. I think if I would believe that I'm capable of doing it, I would be much more calmer and I would write the different versions. Because I would focus on, oh I'm good at this and this and this so this is one version. But I'm also good at this, this, and this, and this is not, you know, first version, maybe this is not as important as the third version and just combine it and play with it. Not take more time, but I spent too much time on one piece.

R: And when do you think you learned how to think about yourself with the strengths and the weaknesses that now you said -

S: Well this was the start. This was like the first time I need to realize what I'm good at and it helped me a lot because you know the sentence that I was reading aloud about the international point of view. Because as we talked about before, I had a hard time after US State when I came to Czech. So, during the hard time, it was difficult for me to be proud of being exchange student and living in US State. Again, it was the culture thing. Again, I got ashamed that I'm special and again, I got you know, knocked to the crowd, you're sticking out too much, you shouldn't be doing that. So, I forgot that I am special because I was an exchange student. I had experience that most people didn't have. And so, this was the first kick, like you have to realize who you are and you have to own it because it's not bad things. So, this was the first. So, some of the sentences were really personally important to me. And then it was just a process of doing my Maturita exam, getting in, which was a huge thing because it was the first time I said, "I did it." Like I actually was

capable of doing it and then even started more and the whole transformation is here, like just now. Because during university. Because we have “University Graduate Attributes” and these kinds of things and you can relate, and you can evaluate. And just because they are enhancing me the skills that I didn’t have in Czech. Again, analyzing, critical thinking, and these things are so important to me because they are not just for the subject, but for my personal life as well. I am critical thinking about myself, making arguments. And critically doesn’t mean what it means in Czech. In Czech, critically means really negative, here critically means how? What? When? Is it true? Did you get to the point? So it’s just the way you’re thinking that my brain is learning to adopt, helps me in my personal life, as well. And with doing this, it’s just emotional intelligence, it just goes all together. Even societies and things like that. You know, I’m capable of being Events Coordinator, so now I own it. So now if I would write it (the personal statement), that would be one of the first things that I would write because I have experience, I can do it, I’m capable, I just know, I’m good at this. But before it was something that I would never mention. And I didn’t believe it was something special, even in my head, it was just, “Oh yeah, well I’m doing it.” Period. Nothing special about it. So it’s just the whole process, but this was definitely the start.

R: Are there any, like you said that you were happy with the research you did, so were there any resources other than those I guess that you wish you had to have helped you?

S: More universities. I had only few like how to - or more maybe I would search more on how to write it because we were talking about like when we were talking about it now and I was thinking about it, it just didn’t work out with me when they (the UCAS website) had it separate. So maybe if I would, maybe there are some websites that you know help you to actually write it or how to structure it or I just didn’t find, I just didn’t search for them, I think. I was purely searching how to write a personal statement, not like is a tool for writing it. I could have searched more websites or something like that.

R: So like looking for a tool to help you write it.

S: Yeah, yeah. Because it’s just the UCAS wasn’t for me, it just didn’t work with me. So, I think if I would take my time and actually learn, like looked. Because like I was looking for the characteristics of personal statement, like what should be inside. But not in *how* to write it. Is it good to have multiple drafts or versions? Or should I make one and then write it? Or should I make outline first and then write it? Or just like how?

R: And so also when you say you’re Googling these things were you Googling them in English or in Czech?

S: English, English. I was Googling them in English.

R: And are there any resources you wish your teachers had had to help you?

S: Of course. Like if they would have something like this. And I think that’s a big, not disadvantage. But I think that’s a big mistake, they are not ready for this. Because if your

English teacher are not able to help you to get to British university, who is supposed to help you? You know what I mean, I just don't see the point. If they spend 8 years teaching someone in English and not being able to help them to go to university that speaks the language, what is it for? Like, do they expect that I will go to Czech university and then learn the English more and then - like why should I learn it all the time and then nothing with it? So, I think it would be more focused on - and the same, and uh, it's, sorry - it's applicable to all of the different languages. You know, I think that would be good if they spend 8 years teaching someone different language, maybe they should know how to apply to the country, to university because or to job or anything. You know, work with the language more. Because if - you know it's funny, if someone, you know how **gympl** (nickname for university preparatory school) works. If someone is studying 8 years for biology and then decides to become a doctor, they know what are the entrance exams, they know which medicine schools are the best. So, it's just the proper subjects that is able to study further. English and other languages should be viewed the same, which are not. It's just, oh, second language. Done.

R: So, sort of along that line, thinking about it maybe like, they're preparing you for Maturita, but not beyond?

S: Yes, exactly, yes. If they would focus more on, because during for example, the biology, because that's a great example, you know they actually do the mock entrance exams to medicine and things like that. I know it's hard to do, you know you can apply there are so many English-speaking countries, it's so diverse and stuff but I think personal statement is just one thing that is almost everywhere-- it's America, it's in Australia, it's in Britain. Like these little, the main things, they don't *need* to know everything, I don't accept to know them everything, that's not possible, but like trying to encourage more the students and be prepared that there will be questions about it. Because if I am learning the language for, in my case, 9 years, then I think it's a waste of not using it and it doesn't matter if it's English, is it German, is it Spanish, it should be viewed as a proper subject that can be studied further.

R: Ok. And if you were for the record, if you were to study related to English for the Czech university, would you have to write any sort of something like this (personal statement), do you think?

S: Not sure, not sure, but I don't think so. Because if you study English, from what I know, I don't know if you can quote me when I don't know. But from the pieces that I know, you can study English either on the Education Faculty or you can study in the Philosophy Faculty. And I think that you need to take English exams and there is definitely like part of it's writing, but I don't think it's personal statement. I don't think it's about yourself. I think you just need to write some given task or given topic that's similar to Maturita exam or something like that. Like in the structure may be harder, but I know that if you're applying to because Czech University Philosophy Faculty I was looking at it and I remember that if I had the certificate, I didn't have to do the entrance exams.

R: The FCE, the Cambridge certificate?

S: Yeah because I had level C1, so I wouldn't need to pass the entrance exams. Well, I would because I had the certificate longer than 2 years, but if it would be less than 2 years, I wouldn't have to take the exam.

R: So, if I had not been there to help you with this, what do you wish your teachers would have been able to do?

S: Tell me what exactly I'm supposed to be writing about. And yeah just direct me the way you did. Because that was brilliant. Like you exactly told me, focus more on this. It was just all of it but mainly the context, mainly the style and I wish they would tell me.

R: Ok, so last, last section. So what type of writing do you do now as a student in the United Kingdom?

S: Academic essays, academic writing, and reflective pieces.

R: And what type of, like do you get -

S: And personal statements actually. For positions, like committee members and uh - Or cover letters when I'm applying for jobs.

R: So I guess, how many months have you been studying and about how much writing of these different types have you been doing?

S: A lot. So let's say I am one term and half through. I had two essays that were 1,500 words. I had three essays on reflective writing, 800 words, I had the reflective piece for S.T.A.R. award, which was altogether roughly 2,000 words. Cover letter, like 3 times. Personal statement, 3 times because of the positions. CV, does it count?

R: Mhm

S: So CV for part-time jobs, I had to change it 2 times because I was renewing the information. And then just like motivation pieces like for the volunteering and these kinds of things and a bunch of formal letters, emails all the time to professors, needs to be formal. And as an Events Coordinator I need to cooperate with sponsors, I need to book venues and these kind of things. And that's daily, that's like 10 emails daily.

R: And I guess thinking about the same amount of time when you were in the Czech Republic, how does the amount of writing compare?

S: Like in English class?

R: Or in Czech class too, I guess?

S: Ha, that's funny. So, in Czech class, in the past 3 years, let's say it was 2 pieces per year. And English, once a month or once per lecture, so it really depends how long the lecture was. You know, like the top -

R: You mean like the textbook chapters?

S: Yes, chapter, chapter sorry. Yeah, so it was how long. So, per chapter it was one writing. And usually it was month, month and a half it depended on the topic covered in the chapter.

R: And do you receive any types of feedback from your professors here?

S: Yes, all the time. We always get a feedback for our essays, but I've been nailing the... I have all A's. So, I received one feedback which was really, really nice, but also at the same time it was the only feedback that I got. She highlighted the whole paragraph and said it was supposed to be linked better and introduce the paragraph better. So that was the only negative feedback that I got.

R: Ok. And the feedback you're getting it like the Track Changes?

S: Yeah it's the same. Because we, we put it through Turnitin. And some of them want it to print it out and hand it like in paper and some of them want to do it online. But either way, it will always come out like this [DRAFT 1 FEEDBACK]: highlighted, comments on the side, or in a sheet, feedback sheet.

R: And have you ever yet discussed any of your feedback in person with professors?

S: No not yet, because I didn't need it, so I didn't do it.

R: Ok. And you kind of maybe mentioned this already, but did writing your statement of purpose at all prepare you for like any of the writing that you do now?

S: Yeah, yeah, it got me to the mindset of writing, so it definitely helped me. And also I'm writing the personal statements now for the different positions. So I'm writing the same thing, kind of, just shorter. And it's the same style, so definitely helped. So now I don't have to wonder and I'm not in the panicking mode. And I know how to write it, and so far, so good.

R: Good. Is there anything else you can think of?

S: I mentioned - we didn't mention one thing, that I was discussing to, with the other teacher, with my Economics teacher. Because I had to check with her, if, as, from the Economics and Business point of view, as a teacher that teaches the subject, I was just like, because she knew English so I was asking her, do you think that I'm showing enough passion for the subjects? Would you be interested in the way that I'm writing

about it? And stuff like that. And she said that she - because remember I had the part about my dad and stuff founding a firm or company or something...

R: In the first draft?

S: Yeah I think so it was somewhere or we mention it in the messages. But she told me not to write it because it would discourage her as a professor to put my dad as an example because she would see it as, "my dad does it, I want to do it," which wouldn't show her the passion. So, she said more exact like examples or like details why I'm interesting it will be much more efficient than just stating that this and this.

R: And was it the same with her as the other teacher where you got the feedback in the document?

S: No, that was speaking. I printed it out, I handed it in in the lesson, she read it through, then she gave me feedback.

R: So you met with her in school?

S: Yes, I met with her in school. Yes.

R: And I guess, with both of the teachers were you speaking with them in Czech about the writing?

S: Yes, well no, actually with English Teacher we always talk in English so with English Teacher in English, maybe some comments in Czech which we didn't know, or I wasn't sure about, but Economics Teacher in Czech.

R: Anything else -

S: No, I think that's it.

R: And so also just about the timing. When you were meeting with the Economics teacher it was some time -

S: This. This.

R: Like right after the New Year.

S: Yeah, after New Year, but before we actually started to working on it together, like fully working on, fully worked it on together.

R: And the same with English Teacher or that was maybe some time - ?

S: I think that was clash. That started maybe before the first draft but then it continued during our conversations.

R: So, after we had started working together, and then did you show her what we were writing about?

S: I didn't show her, but I think, or maybe I did, I'm not sure. We were discussing it for sure because I felt like I was doing a really bad job. So, I was like more trying to, we were really close, so I was trying like more the emotional support and stuff like that. Yeah, it was just more, I don't even know what I said or what I did, I remember just crying all the time. It was one of the worst moments of my life, it was so hard. And then I got just emotionally like exhausted. So I know I was complaining to her about it all the time. That I don't want to write it, and I don't know how to write it, and I don't know like what you suggested if I can even do it, and things like that.

R: Well it I mean it makes sense, because if you look at the one, the multiple pages [MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT], like that covers from it was 9:30 pm your time to 1 in the morning.

S: Yeah, I was. Yeah, oh god. Yeah, yeah - never again. Yeah, I don't know what else to say about that.

R: Never again in that you will never apply for something again or that you - ?

S: No, no never again in the position of such desperation.

R: Uh huh.

S: Yeah, and hopefully. Well maybe in a different language, but not English again.

R: Good. Ok, anything else?

S: No, I think that's from my part. Do you have anything else?

R: No, I'm good. Ok.

S: Ok. Cool.

R: Thank you.

S: No problem.

Appendix Q: University Gatekeeper Interview Excerpts

University Recruiter Interview

Researcher (R): But, given though that there's sort of all this information out there about sort the content, and that you provide about sort of what sort of academic aspects of the student or whatever should be going *in* the personal statement, why do you think that there's still some, or like why do you think that there's still some more questions?

University Recruiter (UR): I don't know. I think that the, that, that students and guidance counselor, teachers, are like kind of think that the personal statement maybe is like the gateway to getting in. And I think because the personal statement, there isn't a set structure for it. We want it to be personal, but actually I think it's, it's quite *hard* for students to get their head around that sometimes. They kind of think it might be sort of like an exam, you know, they need, they're going to get points for particular things. When actually it's a *personal* statement, we want *them* to write about themselves and their course, you know why they've applied to that course. I think they're always looking for this magic formula, which doesn't exist.

R: Yea. Ok, is there anything else related to your role or that you, is coming to mind?

UR: I don't think so. I'm trying to think if there's anything else. No, I mean the personal statement it does have a, it's something that produces a lot of questions. And it *is* something that you know we do try to advise as much as possible for what we are looking for. I mean ultimately, yea UK University, will be looking for that kind of academic focus within it, but I think we're so keen to kind of emphasize that it's a personal statement, we want like the applicant, we want them to kind of to beat out of the applicant what they feel fit. And yea the resources, I think the resources we have, the resources are available kind of through other university websites, as well as the UCAS website, yea the resources there.

University Evaluator Interview

Researcher (R): So, ok, so you've talked a little bit before about like different guidance counselors working with international students on the UK process, so who do you like, who do you think generally works with students maybe to help them? Or who is sort of responsible if a student is unsure how to apply to UK University or other UK universities?

University Evaluator (UE): Well, having done a quick look through the international applicants who actually apply to us, I think there are, broadly speaking, two categories. There will be an intermediate one. But broadly speaking, there are *those* who are applying with very strong school support, often with school encouragement. The school may very well have indeed been the origin of the thought to apply to UK University, not always, but that can be so. It would be interesting, and I've never done this, to do map of

the international schools that are routine promoters of UK University. And I don't just mean a map, in the sense of a map of the world with little dots on it, now that would be interesting, wouldn't it? But also looking at where the concentrations are.

...

And it therefore looks as though when, for the thought of a better expression, guidance counseling, is happening, when people are talking about futures post-school, UK University is one of the things that is, is promoted. I suspect in some such places there is an almost mini-industry of people who help with interview practice, and training and so on. And it may *even* be more systematic than in many of the English independent schools where it's quite well embedded as a thing to apply to UK University. So, I suspect that they get help, in *those* schools, from teachers, from non-classroom teachers, deputy heads and so forth, there may even be a university admissions coordinator who has that as a very high-profile part of their role. And they will get help from all of these sources. I'm confident that happens very much in way that it would happen with a fee-paying English school. Then the other extreme, is the person who's making a slightly speculative personal application. And where in *those* cases one will often find, that the school reference is open-handed and very enthusiastic, but generally not very comprehending in the process. So, "I confirm that N is a thoroughly attractive and pleasant young person, always polite and punctual in class." But says *nothing* whatsoever about their academic profile. And when one writes back and says, "Could you tell us something about their academic profile?" responds with either surprise or horror as if anyone would want to know about that. And I think *those* to *me* are the hardest ones because there is *no* reason to think that a very ambitious, international applicant with, I mean this is not bad support, one's not saying this is unsupportive, the school's being supportive, but it's not being very comprehending.

...

R: So, for those students then who are trying on their own or the school doesn't have the expertise, but they want to support the student, where do you recommend is the best place to go to find out the information?

UE: Well the university, so the UCAS website, because if somebody is interested in coming to the UK, they're making a UCAS application, they might as well fill in more than one university choice. There are you know, so if you're trying for UK University and you want to read English literature, not a subject I teach, if you wanted to do that, why not apply to other UK University as well, say? Now, if you're going to put in for English literature and somebody international applicant interested in English literature probably does want to come to the UK for English literature. So, they put in their application. The UCAS website is one source of information, the UK University website is another. I think what I've said is probably right that the candidates in that situation *usually* do their homework, they usually do do the work. What *they* need to do, what the candidate needs to be signaled to do, is to advise their, almost give the URLs, give the weblinks to their referee to help their referee to understand what the process is.

...

Appendix R: Czech Advisor Interview Excerpts

English Teacher Interview

Researcher (R): So if you think about when she did come to you, what was your approach to working with her?

English Teacher (ET): So, first was a big excitement. So when the excitement went away, it was much, much more difficult because I realized that it is a big responsibility and that I would feel, if she failed, I would feel like I failed. So it was, I started like, I started studying. I started looking at the Internet and I started to learn myself how would I learn it, if I wanted to go to university? What would I do? How would I write it? But, it wasn't easy because as I said it is something completely different in Czech and in English.

R: So you said you started to study and sort of teach yourself how you would do it also if you were applying to school. And so where did you first go to try and teach yourself? Did you like go on the...?

ET: Google.

R: Google. And were you Googling in Czech or in English?

ET: In English. I think that wouldn't be any help, if I Google it in Czech. Because we don't write it in Czech. When you go to university here you don't need any application letter. So I think there would be no source even. So I, I, you know you know a lot from movies even. So I had some idea how it should look like but I needed, I needed more resource.

Counselor Teacher Interview

Researcher (R): Yeah. So going from the first draft to the second draft you're helping them find -

Counselor Teacher (CT): It's, it's much, second draft is much better all the time. Because typically they write some very nice story about them. Then, they, during the first meeting they realize that ok, I have to much more show my skills and abilities and **prove** it and, or write there some good example or be **more** detailed, what **I'm** studying and what **I'm** doing, what **I'm** reading. If I read some **book, why**, what was inside, what was surprising for me, if I compared that ideas from something else, or what we are doing in classroom and this book show me another approach to the problem. And be more specific and more detailed. And typically the second, second meeting it's much better and even the personal statement is on much higher level.

R: And so in the first meeting when they are hearing this first sort of, type of criticism or feedback, do the students, do they say like, "Ok, I understand, now I change it," or are they a bit more...?

CT: Sometimes they don't believe that we have right. But typically when they read some, another personal statements of their friends or schoolmates they realize that ok, there is some difference and I would follow some advices.

R: And so and then when you are sort of helping them to write the first draft even, are you telling them to think about like specific books they read or specific subjects or...?

CT: Sometimes I am asking, "And did you read something?" "Or did you read something?" "Did you do more or why it's... why do you want to?" I still, I sometimes, I still don't understand from the personal statement why they want to study **this** course. "So, did you do more?" "Do you have some **experience**?" Sometimes, "Yea, I am visiting with Academy of Science and I'm working there for two years." "Ok, so write it down." "Oh, do you think it's interesting?" What a question...

Admissions Advisor Interview

Researcher (R): And then you were saying that a lot of, like some of them would just start writing and they wouldn't think beforehand. So what type of thinking or planning would you recommend to students before starting to write?

Admissions Advisor (AA): They should really do some practices, like typical, like brainstorming. You know thinking about the answer, that's what Czechs don't do too. There's a prompt and they start writing and they write great essay, but it doesn't answer the question. So really think about the prompt before and really, spend time on reflection. So the students who, basically I always told them, that the good essay writing starts **much** longer before you start writing. So even I recommended if they came in time, during summer, if they have free time, they can relax, they can think about their life, their visions, their perspectives on the world. You know they can really kind of, do these reflections. Because then they can realize what's important. And to be honest it's difficult for like adult people, sometimes they never reflected in their life, and they may be old. And for someone who is 17, 18, 19 it's something the first time they need to reflect their life. What's important for them? What makes them who they are? So it's, the difficult, most difficult part is not the writing, it's the thinking. So they, through that even if they did the writing practice, they had to realize that first they might think. The writing it's just expression of the thoughts.

R: And so would you recommend that they, so **how** would they do this thinking? Would they write it down? Would they just sit there and think in their heads?

AA: We usually recommended this like brainstorming practice. So to write down anything that comes to their mind. And then kind of like reflect on that, choose what is really most important, which also could help them with selecting the topic. And probably the people who were more open to themselves, had the strongest topic at the end. But again there was that like barrier that they write down things and they said nothing,

nothing is interesting. But it was usually question of how open they were to themselves and how, how far they allowed to go deep in their thoughts and motivations.

Appendix S: Ethical Considerations

CUREC Approval

Before undertaking any action towards data collection, approval was granted from the Central University Research and Ethics Committee (CUREC) at the University of Oxford (Appendix T) without any further interrogation or modifications required.

Anonymity

Due to the intimate nature and self-report data collected, all identifying aspects of all participants were anonymized by using general proper noun descriptors of the various actors and locations of the interviews. Participants consented to this process prior to the interviews taken place.

Subjectivity

Although this study aimed to find objective solutions to the Problem, the natures of narrative inquiry and case study research introduce elements of subjectivity that influenced the study's conclusions. It is encouraged that future studies into the Problem both within the Czech Republic and as may exist for other EFL secondary school students go beyond this study to ensure reliability.

In addition, the Researcher's role as a mediator between the Czech and Anglophone actors of this study is important to note. Firstly, the Researcher's involvement with the Problem meant that purposive sampling took place to satisfy the demands of this dissertation study within the one-year time constraint. Secondly, the Researcher's experience with the Problem over the course of 5 years influenced the study design and proposed hypothesis. Thirdly, a power-hierarchy may have influenced Czech participants' responses due to the Researcher's status as a L1-English speaker with US and UK university experience. All three were taken into consideration to the best of the Researcher's ability.

Appendix T: CUREC APPROVAL

Subject: CUREC Application Approval: [REDACTED]

From: Heath Rose <heath.rose@education.ox.ac.uk>

Wed 2/28/2018 5:01 PM

To: [REDACTED]; Cc:
Education Research Office <research.office@education.ox.ac.uk>;

CUREC Application Approval: [REDACTED]

Title: Where to turn? A case study of Czech student and local advisor experiences of writing statements of purpose for undergraduate Anglophone admissions

Researchers: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

Please note that CUREC approval does not guarantee access to participants, and it is your responsibility to check whether countries or contexts in which you plan to conduct your research might impose additional requirements.

If your research involves participants whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question (this includes those under 18 and vulnerable adults), then it is advisable to read the following NSPCC professional reporting requirements for cases of suspected abuse <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/information-service/factsheet-child-abuse-reporting-requirements-professionals.pdf>

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to research.office@education.ox.ac.uk for consideration.

Good luck with your research study.

Yours sincerely, Heath Rose

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Heath Rose
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